

T H E

WIRE



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grateful dead in vegas

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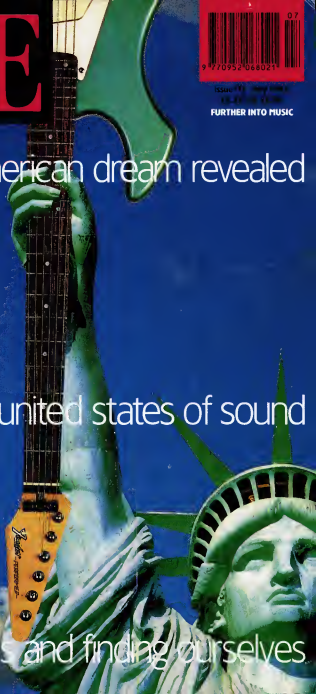
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inside

-
- 4 Sounding Off**
News, events, dates, ideas, letters and live reports
-
- 10 An A-Z of Ambient**
Your guide to the music that's all around you (literally!)
-
- 12 Sun Ra R.I.P.**
We remember the first man into space
-
- 14 Michael Nyman**
Louise Gray touches base with the busy Brit minimalist
-
- 18 Sven Våth**
Kodwo Eshun takes tea with the ambient Frankfurter
-
- 20 Barrister**
David Toop talks beats with the Nigerian drum-master
-
- 22 Caspar Brötzmann**
Mark Sinker trades licks with the Berlin guitar-bliatzer
-
- 24 Company Week**
Ben Watson looks forward to the improv bonanza
-
- 26 Seeing Things**
Stuart Harrison paints the Great American Picture
-
- 28 Prince**
Wire-writers assess the little man's career so far
-
- 34 Another America**
Chicagoan John Corbett realigns his country's musical priorities
-
- 38 The Grateful Dead in Vegas**
Laura Connelly attends the unlikely marriage
-
- 42 Wynton Marsalis**
The definitive interview, transcribed by Richard Cook
-
- 46 Invisible Jukebox: Lester Bowie**
Philip Watson tests the St Louis trumpeter
-
- 48 Great Lost Recordings**
Hopley Glass rediscovers an ancient electronic prizewinner
-
- 50 Print Run**
We review Grief Marcus on punk
-
- 52 Reel To Reel**
David Ermer reviews abstract cinema and The Cure live
-
- 53 Competitions**
Win Africando CDs, Coldcut Jazz Breaks CDs, Deep Blues CDs and videos, and Barbican jazz tickets
-
- 54 Soundcheck**
Records mighty and fine, reviewed by our flighty-minded writers
-
- 63 Subscribe!**
Subscribe — and win one of three fine Creation releases!
-
- 74 The Write Place**
You continue the arguments we start

sounding **ff** live

**News items
should reach us
by Monday 5 July
for inclusion in the
August issue**

**Sounding Off
is compiled by
Andrew Pothecary**

■ **Summer Festivals 1: UK roundup**
The annual Glastonbury pig out (25, 26, 27 June) means you can take your pick on the main stage from the likes of Bamba Maal and Wynton Marsalis, on the Jazz World Stage, 0-Influence, James Taylor Quartet or Fun-Da-Mental, or perhaps Suede, The Orb or Jamiroquai on the NME Stage, and combine it all with cabaret, circus and movies (myself, I think it's a pity you just can't stay at home and watch it on

top and fun far that is much, much less than the half of it. For further information and details of your local ticket agent call 0336 404 909, otherwise tickets for the weekend (\$49 including camping) can be had from any Mean Fiddler outlet. Meanwhile at Rivermead, Reading on the same dates this year's WOMAD will be underway, your choice from, for example, Mighty Sparrow, Chief O Sekuru Ayinde Barnister (16), King Sunny Adé, Eddi Reader, Steve Williamson (17), Daniel Lanois, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan or Roberto Pío's Latin Jazz Ensemble (18) plus, it goes without saying, many, many more. Weekend tickets at \$40, day tickets at \$12.50 (16) or \$17.50 (17, 18), concs available. Call the credit card hotline on 0734 591591 or First Call or Ticketmaster. On a smaller scale and centring on jazz are the South Bank Jazz and Blues Festival at Gmmsby including Brian Priestley, Orphy Robinson and Elvin Jones (2-4) (for tickets call 0472 342 422), and the Glasgow International Jazz Festival (1-11) where there's Nina Simone, David Murray, Hermeto Pascoal, Ahmad Jamal, a Scottish date for the Art Ensemble of Chicago plus many others. Ticket information on 041 227 5511.

■ **Summer festivals 2: World roundup**
The San Sebastian Jazz Festival (23-27) features a stellar line up including CJ Chenier's Zydeco Band (23), Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Don Pullen (24), Charlie Haden (26) and the Art Ensemble (27). Bookings and information on



34 43 48 11 79. The enormous North Sea Jazz Festival (1000 artists) is from 9-11 July and features the likes of Yellowjackets, BB King, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, Chaka Khan and John Scofield all at Congresgebouw in The Hague, Holland (31 0 70 350 20 34). There's an open air jazz festival in Malta for those looking to combine a Mediterranean holiday with music (23-25) that will feature among others Charlie Haden, Tania Miana and Ali di Meola. Tickets are about \$15 a night for those already there or there's a Multitours trip for four or seven nights from \$244 (071 821 7000). And finally there's the 33rd Festival International de Jazz at Antibes, Côte d'Azur (15-28) where you can see Jesse Davis (15), a homage to John Coltrane with Rashied Ali, Ravi Coltrane, Archie Shepp and Carlos Santana (25) and Stanley Jordan (26) and others, though you may like to leave before Nigel Kennedy premieres in France and lowers the tone (28) (Tel 93 33 95 64).

■ **Big names comin' at ya**
To tie in with our retrospective feature (ahem) Prince plays two shows in the UK this month, at Edinburgh's Meadowbank Stadium (29) and London's Wembley Arena (31). Get your plaid shirts on: coinciding with the release of his new Unlugged album (which we forgot to review this month — oops), rawing folk-rock warhorse Neil Young plays London's Finsbury Park (11), supported by Seattle Grunge masters Pearl Jam and fey Manchester lops James), and SECC, Glasgow (12). Finally, office heroine, soul survivor Chaka Khan jets in to play London's Hammersmith Apollo (8). Attitude and control in abundance (now when's the Rufus revival due to start?)

■ **Just time to catch the mid-summer Jazz**
On a Summer's Day, a Mean Fiddler Jazz Café festival at the Alexandra Palace Park, London on 27 June. The hot-summer line-up includes Al Jarreau, the Brecker Brothers, Courtney Pine, Roy Ayers, David Sanborn and Bhika Mseleku. Tickets are £22.50 in advance from any Mean Fiddler venue or Ticketmaster (071 344 4444). Also for the quick off the mark is Arto and Flora Purim's Fourth World gig at Subterrania, London on 28 June, billed as a back-by-popular-demand Latin Jazz Dance special with the band being supplemented by members of the London based percussion group Afro Bloc. From 8pm-2am, tickets \$8 in advance but \$10 on the door (081 961 5490).

■ **Something! Else**
continue their club gigs at Subterrania into July proper with a regular Saturday night date with OJs, showcasing recent soulful rap successes Dodge City Productions (3), dance funk from Raw Stylus (10) and the no-introduction-necessary Courtney Pine (17) — this time round with his British band Meanwhile, O'Note — another band beyond the exhausted jazz/rap tag — will be providing their many-sourced totally unhearsaid music for free at the Hackney Free Community



HOTV) Tickets for the adventurous are \$58 for the weekend (0272 76 7868) and for the latest act bookings there's a hotline (0839 66 88 99). With more time to spare, there's the Mean Fiddler's The Phoenix weekend at Stratford upon Avon (16, 17, 18 July) where the line up includes Sonic Youth, George Clinton, The Pooh Sticks, Courtney Pine (16), Faith No More, Or Phibes, Gil Scott Heron (17), The Black Crowes, Living Colour, Los Lobos, Gang Starr and Jazz Jamaica (18) and even with a big

Festival, Hackney Downs Park (3) at 4.30pm

■Mike Westbrook will be leading his 20 piece orchestra through three dates of compositions for the jazz orchestra he and Kate Westbrook have put together over the past two decades. They'll be at the 100 Club, London (14), the Newark Festival, Newark Castle (22) and Jazz On a Summer's Weekend, Tunbridge Wells (31)

■It's been mentioned already so this time round it's just a reminder — that Company Music is happening from 20-24 July at The Place Theatre, London. Performances, from the ten across-the-world improvisors, including Derek Bailey, Don Byron and Ikuo Mori can be seen at all five nights for £20 or nightly for £8 (071 387 0031)

■And continuing on the improvising theme, the Alex Maguire-Johannes Bauer-Will Kellers Trio will be touring in July. The piano-trombone-percussion group — who between them have clocked up previous collaborations with the likes of Evan Parker, Louis Moholo, the Cecil Taylor European Big Band and Marilyn Crispell — will be at The Vortex, London (1), The Glasgow Jazz Festival (3), The Bradford Festival (5), The Four Bars Inn, Cardiff (8) and The Fishermans, Brighton (9).



■13 years of top indie label 4AD are to be celebrated at the ICA in London from 19-24 July. The multi-media event will include

appearances from label bands like His Name Is Alive, Pale Saints and Red House Painters (see feature, issue 112), a selection from the work of excellent 4AD sleeve designers Vaughn Oliver's v23, plus, at the venue's Cinematheque, promos, short films and animations from the label's history. Ticket information from the ICA (071 930 3647)

■Irish/American ruffneck HipHoppers House of Pain will be at the Phoenix Festival as part of a UK tour which also includes The Town & Country, Leeds (13), Barrowlands, Glasgow (14), The Academy, Manchester (16), Rock City, Nottingham (18) and the Brixton Academy, London (20). Support acts are blunted Hispanic rappers Cypress Hill and new kids in the hood Funkdoobiest.

■Free and improvised (and, indeed, free to see) music for those with free time. There are weekday lunchtime performances at the Royal Festival Hall each day (12.30-2pm) from 13-16 July when, under the title *Take Two*, piano duos will provide lunchtime music from the jazz/improvised end of the spectrum. Among them, rising UK jazz scene player Andrea Vicari teams with Huw Warren (13), Jonathan Gee with Steve Rose (14), Keith Tippett and new free player John Law (15), Pete Jacobson and In Co-Motion's Steve Loder (16)

■As part of the London International Festival of Theatre the ICA are hosting an urban Chinese programme of music, fiction, film and video with an energetic mixture of traditional melodies and irreverent rock against a background of Chinese MTV and video art from Beijing rock scene performer He Yong. Tickets are £6, and it runs from 30 June to 3 July (with an after-show discussion on 2 July) (071 413 1459)

■A range of black Australian music will be at the South Bank's Corroboree festival of First Australian music, film, storytelling and dance on the weekends

an editor's idea

The good and bad in America's freedoms bang right up against each other. They always have. Long ago, at a time when millions were fleeing clogged and corrupt old Europe for the chance to remake their lives in wide open space, there was a Civil War raging — about who in America counted as a real person: *Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness* (except for slaves) was the version of the Constitution one side were fighting for. This nation put together by committee, had dispensed with kings and similar foolishness, and made every provision for enterprise and invention to thrive — but there were certainly glitches in the notion of property that still needed to be ironed out.

History lesson over? If you like. But the reasons that American music can these days nowhere be escaped are all caught up in such history. So the spirit of Woodstock appears in Prague and Tallinn — and there are Elvis impersonators to be found in Calcutta. The longhair rock quartet is a symbol of undogmatic non-conformity worldwide — while a small, ferocious, utterly American phenomenon like Free Jazz is now a stock art-music mode in all parts of Europe, its former "blackness" now (only?) metaphor for committed marginality and "spiritual" resistance (to Coca Cola, or Madonna, if they can be told apart).

The 20th century, someone once said, would be the American Century — and for good or bad, that's what happened. The centre everywhere — whether embraced or attacked — is American popular culture. In the case of music, one easy reason can be stated in three words: Thomas Alva Edison, the man who invented the phonograph in 1877, the man, indeed, who invented the idea of the inventor-as-profession. And the phonograph gave American music a headstart for the future — at a moment when no one (frankly) gave a toss about it, it began to flower and to fight in its new technological playground.

Out of the Carter Family, Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong, out of Charles Ives and the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, it unfolded, incredibly fast, into an enormous number of modes and forms, until today that very spread and diversity, and the symbolic and social conflicts that shape it, are mapped wholesale onto like and unlike conflicts in far-flung quarters of the globe.

American music is at one and the same time a matter of enterprise and invention, and a matter of market conformity. Often the two notions appear, at war, in the very same piece (or song, or symphony). And the strange thing is, even as the American century ends, there are still spaces to be found, frontiers to be crossed, freedoms to be won. **MARK SINKER**

sounding Off

between 24 July and 8 August. The well-established Yothu Yindi (31) mix traditional instruments and modern music technology at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, The Mills Sisters, Torres Strait Islanders in their robes who all hold down day jobs, sing guitar-accompanied "happy songs" — for free — outside at 3.45pm and in the evening — for tickets — in the Purcell Room (both 24), and Roger Knox leads the country Euraba Band (31). Others such as didjendoo player Richard Walley



PHOTO: LORRAINE

(with Django Bates) and political singer Archie Roach appear in August. (071 928 8800)

■ **Unmissable** — and sponsored by *The Wire* — is the exclusive chance in England to catch the great black music (ancient to the future) of the Art Ensemble of Chicago (they also have a date in Glasgow, see Festival roundups). A Somethin' Else promotion, this is the first return to England in ten years for the Ensemble and features a tribute to the Chicago blues tradition and includes guests Chicago Beau on harp and vocals, Herb Walker on guitar and vocals plus Amma Claudine Myers, Frank Lacy and James Carter. Two Chicagos, therefore, for the price of one at The Union Chapel, North London on 8 July (also with two shows, 7pm and 10pm). Credit card bookings on Ticketmaster (071 344 4444), and tickets from Tower Records, Piccadilly or Union Chapel box

office (£12.50 adv, £9 concs)

■ **Serious/Speakout** are presenting the Michael Nyman Band at the Royal Festival Hall (with guests Tino of London, Virginia Black and Sarah Leonard) on 1 July, and the Kronos Quartet at St Giles Church (22) and The Barbican (21, 23, 24). The Kronos Quartet's date on 24 also features the Thomas Mapfumo Band, Wu Man and Steve Lacy. On 1 July expect material from the recent *The Essential Michael Nyman* release, and from Kronos Quartet expect Philip Glass, John Zorn, La Monte Young and Zhou Long depending on which night you attend. Tickets 071 928 8800 (Nyman) and 071 638 8891 (Kronos)

■ **For all the unreconstructed soul-heads** out there, a couple of items to ward off creeping HipHop/Techno paranoia: A self-styled Mississippi Blues and Soul Spectacular featuring Little Milton, Denise LaSalle and Latimore, backed up by "the original" Muscle Shoals horn and rhythm sections, makes its way to The Mean Fiddler, London (12, two shows) (081 961 5490) and The Ritz, Manchester (13) (061 236 4355). Meanwhile, Millie Jackson ("The Queen Of Extreme")

will be turning the air bright blue at The Tower Ballroom, Birmingham (19) (021 455 7282), The Ritz, Manchester (20) and The Town & Country, Leeds (21) (0532 540540). Support from new *Wille Mitchell* collaborator David Hudson

■ **Pulse**, a new Preston club with a programming policy that reads like one of our features list (so that's where they got their ideas from), has a great inaugural line-up of shows: Hession/Walton/Fell fans Bolt Throver (29 June), Scorn (featuring ex-Napalm Death drummer) current John Zorn collaborator Mick Harris (8 July), Bradford star-tums Fun-da-Mental with excellent local rappers Freed Penalty (15), and, a bit further ahead, Aphex Twin with Scouse samplers Where's The Beach? (5 August). Tickets come at recession-busting prices (£2.50-£5.00), and there's a Trance/Dub/Hardcore sound system to boot. It all happens at Lord Byrons, Tithenham Street (opposite the bus station — which is the largest in Europe, if you don't know). Support this North West initiative! More details on 0772 774 632

■ **Previous Kronos Quartet** collaborator Kevin Volans worked

live from the underground

The crowd at the Edinburgh Playhouse for the Velvet Underground's UK debut reverses the recent even-ing up of the historic male/female imbalance. So they're still the ultimate boys band, which is strange because if Mo Tucker isn't the original not girl then I don't know who is.

One truly odd thing about this collective rebirth is that all four protagonists have played in Britain under their own steam over the past year or so. Perhaps, on reflection, it isn't all that surprising that Lou Reed seems to be the most invigorated by not having to be formerly of the Velvet Underground any more — he's even got rid of that nightmare Michael Bolton perm in honour of the occasion. Which would you rather play? "Black Angel's Death Song" or "Magic & Loss"?

Scotland was an inspired choice of opening night location. After all this proud land boasts more VU tribute bands per head of the

population than any other place in the world. Stephen Pastel sits behind me, but his face betrays no emotion.

Going out, people are trying to remember the songs they didn't play — "What Goes On?", "Sister Ray" and "Pale Blue Eyes" are the three stand-out non-appearances — but all was well with those they did, well, most of them. "The Gift" is not the surprise it once was maybe, and "Sweet Jane" and "Rock n' Roll" would have been best left until Lou's next solo tour, but overall it's the benign dignity of their attempt to prove they were just a good-time garage band all along that really sticks in the mind.

There were no silly on-stage dancers, no backdrops, no real staging of any kind. One attention-seeking Caledonian (probably a fringe-member of the BFM Bandits) shouted out: "This is the most boring load of shite I've ever seen", but

what did he expect? It would have been much sadder for the Velvet Underground to attempt some grand provocation — playing all new stuff, or offering up a complete retrospective of Mo Tucker's solo career — which would only have upset everyone. The disappointment in the voice saying "I thought they'd at least have some flashing white light at the end of 'White Light/White Heat'" is hard enough to bear.

By getting back together for fun, love and money, the Velvet Underground have done a great good — nailing down the coffin lid on unhealthy ideals of sacredness. I hope their "Venus in Fur" Sky TV car-tire adverts are a howling success.

Next morning, Glen Campbell's "Wichita Lineman" is playing over the PA in the shopping mall by the station, and this is not heresy. It just sounds good. **BEN THOMPSON**



of Daniel Lanois (4) and his collaborations with Aaron Neville, U2 and Peter Dinklage as well as a selection of stuff from his new album, a documentary on the life of the 90 year old Spanish composer Joaquín Rodrigo (11) which also looks at how he lives as an artist to whom music means everything even though he is now unable to compose, and a two-part documentary/drama/performance (shot on 35mm) about the life of Czech composer Antonín Dvořák (18 and 25).

On da radio... Since its inception Radio Five has been characterised as a dumping ground for programmes that don't fit easily into the BBC's existing networks and schedules. That's usually been used as an indictment against the incoherent nature of much of the station's output, but it can also be an indication of its capacity to accommodate unpredictable and eclectic programming. Music-wise, the late evening slot (Sunday through Friday 10.10pm-12pm) is reserved for programmes that plug into an array of marginalised and under-resourced musics. Don't worry too much about accepted standards of broadcasting and tune into *Across The Line* (alternative Irish scene) on Sun, *Fabulous!* (we haven't heard this but it's presented by *The World's Mark* "Two mentions in one issue" Llama, so God knows what mayhem ensues) on Mon, *Earshot* on Tues, *Hit The North* (North West indie scene) on Wed, *Eastern Beat* (Bhangra, etc) on Thurs, and *Rave* (Techno, House, club track) on Fri. Also, on Saturday evenings at 7.30 check *Afterpop* Worldwide, for informed insight into current pan-Latin/African movers and shakers. Last words for Radio Three's *Impressions* with *The Wire's* Brian Morton (11 20pm-12.30am) which this month features a programme on Hat Hut records (3) while there's jazz from the Bath Festival with Joanna McGregor and Human Chain (10), Andy Sheppard's Big Co-Motion (17) and harpet Savourna Stevenson plus *The Five Blind Boys Of Alabama* (24) all at 10.30pm-12.30am.

■ For those who prefer to experience their music from the comfort of the living room (remote, couch potato sack and six-pack in easy reach), this month LWT launch their new arts programme — a series of 10 half hours from *The South Bank* team aimed primarily at "younger" viewers. Most interesting programme to the youthful readers of *The Wire*, perhaps, is the programme transmitted on 31 July on *Cyberspace and the Cult of the DJ*. The programme features four films from young directors, the first of which, *Sculpting in Cyberspace*, is about Coldcut's Matt Black, who uses new technology such as CGI and virtual reality to create computer graphics, dance music, video games and visual installations in clubs. There's also a portrait of 15 year old QJ O-Lux, a look at a pirate radio station and a piece on scratching, mixing and rapping. Repeats of all programmes in order begin on Channel 4 on 16 July. Channel 4's own *Sound Stuff* on Sundays at 7pm features the work

letter from bucharest

A rasta in bright colours lope along the drab, grey boulevards of Bucharest through a sea of white faces — a first for many Romanians who stare, giggle, or as one woman did, come close just to touch his dreadlocks.

But Bucharest seemed just as strange to the rasta and the rest of the black and white contingent of French rappers, in the city to play Romania's first big Hip-Hop concert: the horse grazing by the side of the runway as your plane comes in to land; the soldiers everywhere (all pacific as people hasten to tell you), the robot-like bus queues, long lines of people in single file, each a few steps behind the other, and the curious way the residents still look at Westerners, not to mention the pervasive feeling that nothing ever happens here. Bucharest is a city with one hundred and one bizarre details to remind you that you're not in Western Europe any more, a city where bullet holes still riddle the buildings in the main square, and where Ceausescu's monstrous palace still lies empty three and a half years after the Revolution.

Yet even the blackest French rapper strikes a familiar chord in young Romanian hearts when he starts making music. Accordingly, nearly 2000 excited youths crowded into Bucharest's huge Sala Polivalenta on Friday 14 May. They'd only ever heard of Public Enemy, and the hundred dollar question was: would they take to French Hip-Hop?

Democrite D kicked off — two huge dramatic black figures and a rasta spitting out hardcore rap. The audience loved it, and the organizers sat back with a sigh of relief. The other — non-hardcore — groups followed to equally ecstatic reactions, setting explosive or ironic lyrics to samples of jazz and funk. They included Alliance Ethnics, with its two star DJs, and Raggasonic, contributing a splash of ragga — another first for Romania.

"The music scene is a disaster in Romania," explained the organizers later. "Concerts are few and far between, the equipment and instruments unaffordable, and there's nowhere to play or even rehearse." Profits from the show would have gone towards setting up a studio in the city, equipped with a sampler and two turntables — young Romanians must have a lot to rap about after all these years — but unfortunately, the show didn't break even.

In the meantime, the concert's organizers have set up a foundation called Corrupted Morals, which is prepared to organize a concert in Romania for any band that can afford the trip. It will also make a record of the band's music, splitting the proceeds 50-50. Gabriel Andries, the foundation's director, told me that they'd recently contacted John Peel, who talked about their scheme on air, as a result they'd received a spate of letters from English rock bands.

John Peel a household name in Bucharest? Suddenly Romania didn't seem that strange any more. **RAMMA KHAZAM**





SMIRNOFF

THE OTHER SIDE.

a is for **airports**
Everyone hates them. Maybe musichath charms, etc., but there's no beast more savage

than add who's just driven 247 miles with his wife and three kids to find the flight's been delayed for 19 hours. Some folk's soothing melody is other's horrible noise, and next up in the queue is that punky guy with a stomach full of condoms full of drugs. Solution: play shapeless trinky music so quietly that no one can hear it.

b is for **earle brown**
An early disciple of John Cage, Brown says his music is based on the mobile sculptures of Alexander Calder — so it hangs from the ceiling, swinging quietly, until someone by mistake opens the window too wide and you have to retrieve it from under the sofa and bend it back into shape, right?

C is for **chill-out**
Rarely can a prank have gone so horribly wrong — the KLF broke up last year in shame, as the unintended influence of this 1990 LP spread and spread. Fluffy sheep and fluffy clouds on the cover, samples of animals, birds and Mongolian throat singers in the grooves, a slapdash collage meant to mock the whole idea of a Techno you could zonk out to, it caught on when it turned out that irony was not after all a raver-characteristic.

d is for **diegetic music**
"The conventional narrative film constructs a diegesis — a story world, a place of the action. Music enjoys a special status in filmic narration. It can be diegetic (musicians can play in the story, a radio can be on) — or nondiegetic (an orchestra plays as cowboys chase Indians in the desert)" — from *Unheard Melodies* by Claudia Gorbman

e is for, well, **e**
It's 1988, and you're stranded in an aerodrome in Essex

A-Z of ambient

The Wire's speedy guide to music for not really listening to.

with thousands of kids as sweaty as yourself — an altered state might seem to be called for. Especially as all there is to listen to is Phuture's "Acid Tracks", bleeping and whooshing round and round forever. You find yourself curiously drawn by the pulsating colours on the toe of your shoe, and gaze at it for hours. It's summer, and it's love, and any sound at all is fine.

f is for **4'3"**
The audience stops clapping. The pianist opens the lid, and then sits, for the time specified, while the audience becomes restive, and all too aware of all the other sounds there are in a concert hall. Their neighbours, for example. John Cage "wrote" the piece in the 50s: conceptual artists have been kicking themselves ever since. It ends, the lid is closed, and the audience rises as one, surges forwards, and pummels the pianist to mush.

g is for **another green world**
Pastel-hued soft rock without words — Eno's third solo LP, released in 1975, is supposed to have turned music inside out (bringing abstract details to attention, hustling lyrics and guitar solos — the "proper" content — away, or else treating them frivolously).

Actually, if mainstream reviews of his subsequent records are anything to go by — they all say nothing, ever happens — the point hasn't got through at all.

h is for **the haffer trio**
Hardcore adherents of something—or-other, their releases — as baffling as they're beautifully designed — are kind of the opposite of ambient. They sound as if you should just have them on in the background, but they rise softly to seize your attention, even when you've no idea what's really going on (with titles like *Masturbatorium* and *Fuck, who wants to know?*). Their back-cat just recently released through The Grey Area Of Mute.)

i is for **i am in a sitting room**
Alvin Lucier's 1970 Process Music masterpiece is long.

He's explaining what the resonance of the room (enhanced by electronic gizmos) will do to the very words he's speaking, as he's speaking them — but it's magic doesn't unfold until side two of the record. Which tends to demonstrate another process — the way Commercial Ambience, which puts you on the back for not listening properly, has completely buried its avant-garde ancestor.

j is for **richard james**
Seven names are better than one, in the age of android anonymity. Aphex Twin, AFX, Caustic Window, Polygon Window, Joyrex, Soit PP, Blue Cab, and more as we speak. Of course, if Ambient Techno is all about nameless drifting swathes of sound, how come Mr Windows is so eager to accept all this press?

k is for **alison knowles**
"At this performance Alison and her daughter Jessie took turns reading segments, each prepared on a different kind of paper. Whenever one of them came to the end of a segment, they fluttered the page a bit before putting it down. I didn't pay much attention to the sounds of fluttering papers at first, but after a while I began to tune in on this, and to appreciate the vast difference between the sounds of different kinds of paper" — from *The Voice Of New Music* by Tom Johnson.

l is for **daniel lanois**
This now-ubiquitous Canadian producer's late-80s ascendancy is proof, if nothing else, is that his senior partner Eno, since his work with Talking Heads (*Remain in Light*, *My Life in The Bush Of Ghosts*) has turned into the ground rock walks on. Now any old buzzard can stage a critical comeback with a bit of electronic shimmer and some sampled tropical birdsong. No one ever says "nothing happens" when they review these records (even though nothing ever does).

m is for **muzak**
Look it up — it's in the phonebook. Muzak (Planned Music Ltd.). And it isn't a rude word to them — it's a meat ticket, lol a crusade, even Music-while-you-work, bought by the yard? A Wire staffer was once policed in the street on whether there should be piped music on London buses. He said it was fine by him, provided it was

mostly deathmetal

n is for **new music**
Originally a way to say "modern experimental music" without scaring everyone off, it worked so well that now it's a catchall term for everything from Richard Clayderman to Ali Akbar Khan

o is for **obscure records**
The first releases on Brian Eno's mid-'70s label Obscure Records tell their own story

Gavin Bryars's *The Sinking Of The Titanic*; Christopher Hobbs, John Adams and Gavin Bryars's *Ensemble Pieces*; Eno's own *Discreet Music*; David Toop and Max Eastley's *New 6 Records*; covered *Musical Instruments*; Jan Steele and John Cage's *Voices & Instruments*; Michael Nyman's *Decay Music*. Unless you were mighty diligent, you heard it there first

p is for **dr alex paterson**
Paterson's The Orb, an offshoot of KLF, first hit big with "A Huge Evergrowing Pulsating Brain That Rules From The Centre Of The Ultraworld" and "Little Fluffy Clouds." Their secret? A talent for entertaining titles, well-directed PR (they didn't invent the idea of mixing *musique concrète* with dub, for example, but everyone thinks they did), and a huge, evergrowing record collection to select your samples from

q is for **"quiet village"**
Martin Denny's 1957 hit single—from the LP *Exotico*—coincided with a boom in all things Hawaiian, and the dawn of stereo. Ordinary SOs pop backed with Latin percussion and (fake) birdsong, he allowed listeners to pretend this was the sound of a Pacific Islands village, and they loved it. Does this prove what a dull decade that was, or does it give the idea the lie? Clue: these days Denny is something of a hero with the

none-too-conformist likes of Genesis P. Orridge and Boyd Rice *Mondo Bizarro* (as they used to say!)

r is for **rainbow dome music**
It's one thing to acknowledge Eno as a pioneer, and Alvin Lucier's nothing but—but Steve Hillage? Wasn't he the guitarist in Gong, and replacement guitarist at that? Still, credit where credit's due: Gong's founder, Australian arch-hippie Daavid Allen, did help with minimalist Terry Riley's earliest tape-loop experiments, and Hillage was the first to play around with slide-bars and guitar sustain to get that kind of space-floaty noise. Hanging in there pays off—*Rainbow Dome Music* was laughed out of the building first time around. Now people are saying it's seminal

s is for **satie**
Erik Satie (1866–1925) was the eccentric French genius who invented Furniture Music: music to be played as you chatted or ate or bathed (and didn't listen). He used to get up every day at dawn, walk from the suburbs to the centre of Paris—which took him till the early evening—and then set off back

home, arriving there past midnight. When he died, and his admirers trekked out to his faraway apartment, they discovered that the bedsheets had never been changed, and were black with age. All of which may or may not have a revealing bearing on the notion of "ambience."

t is for **tangerine dream**
Edgar Froese's pioneering 70s German electronic rock/drone group preferred to perform their music in cathedrals—perhaps because untoured rock audiences are less likely to catcall or throw beer cans in such surroundings. In cathedrals they'd do what so radical a run of fluting and "atmospheric" releases—*Atem*, *Phaedra*, *Rubycon*, *Stratosfor*—had taught them best to do. They fell asleep

u is for **united states**
Laure Anderson's sex-hour one-woman performance art epic spawned the oddest novelty single ever: "O Superman", a soft, sad celebration-critique of her mother-country. "Well, you don't know me. But I know you. And I've got a message to give to you. Here come the planes."

v is for **volume**
What's on the turntable? It doesn't matter. Turn the volume knob down to one, and even Einstürzende Neubauten are ambient.

w is for **windham hill**
Imagine a mellow San Francisco morning, the warm breeze softly riffling the wind-chimes on your veranda. Windham Hill is the record company that bottled the essence of this sound and marketed it—through bookshops, organic food shops and direct mailing—so scattered Aquarian New Ager everywhere. Founded by guitarist William Ackerman in the mid-'70s, inspired by ECM, Erik Satie, yardward folkie John Fahey, to counter rising disillusion with corporate rock and nasty amplification

x is for **"x for henry flynt"**
Henry Flynt is a little-known psycho-acoustician. This piece, by LaMonte Young, consists largely of smashing all the piano keys down with the forearm. It is the first piece of music Brian Eno ever performed in public.

y is for **lamonte young**
The High Priest of Drone, as everyone knows, founded the Velvet Underground, by convincing John Cale he could play electric viola like that, as loud as he liked. Unlike everyone else on the page, he likes things enormously loud, and—once he got over his early music-in-less-than-a-minute phase—enormously long. Indeed, *The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys* lasted most of the late 60s; you turned up at Young's Theatre Of Eternal Music, and someone was always playing the opening (and only) chord.

z is for **marion zazeala**
LaMonte Young's wife

an
Z
Of A-Z
ambient

Sun Ra

(moved on 30 May 1993)

It may seem like a strange claim to make, in view of all the excellent so-fil flummery that had surrounded him since he began his odyssey in Chicago in the 40s, but at heart Sun Ra was a realist. "It's already after the end of the world — didn't you know that?" If ever a chilling phrase prefigured the desperate streetmood of black music today, this was it, and it was his. Ra had had his radical space-age vision of the way out, but unlike too many gurus and DIY religionists, he refused to believe that things would change for the better so easily — and declined to adapt his vision towards anything a self-serving crusade could be built round. His influence, possibly wider than any of us quite realize, is entirely centred round the tactics he developed to accommodate — and alleviate — his gloomy diagnosis of world affairs.

I interviewed him once, in the late 80s, in Germantown, the shabby suburb of Philadelphia he'd made his homebase since he moved from New York in the early 70s. Here he rehearsed the Arkestra daily, running it more as a hermetic, spiritual microcommunity than any sort of over-professionalized Big Band — and from here he sent out his small-circulation home-made Saturn releases, a flood of music over the decades. Usually, financial autonomy for such an experimental set-up leads to cranky isolation, a rigid audience of inward-facing converts. Ra, by encoding his utopian programmes into a cheerfully marketable cartoon of unbiddable eccentricity, adestepped this altogether. The attitudes he struck and the slogans he coined — "Spaceship Yes! Censorship No!" — radiated generosity towards the outsider. Folks who cared not a whit for "the tradition" (and would have died before they voted — or even secretly thought — along such lines) sang along cheerfully, en masse, to his daft, delightful revolutionary choruses, and loved the feeling of doing so. A few — John Coltrane only the most celebrated — entered his world for guidance, and left it transformed, radical cosmic questers.

We had just wound up the interview — which was really a long, baffling, brilliant monologue, a mix of mind-expanding puns and mumbled futureshock metaphor. He had

sung me a snatch of the Disney songbook, which had just taken its place alongside Ellington in the Arkestra's repertoire — and had expressed his pleasure at appearing recently in a European "fashion-plate" magazine. As I packed up, he showed me the programme to some big East Coast musician he'd just played, alongside bigwig symphony orchestras and stolid jazz greats. It contained the standard big you still read everywhere, born Herman "Sonny" Blount, c. 1910, in Birmingham, Alabama. "Oh, they always write this," he sighed "Blount!" Meaning, I can only suppose (but I had a train to catch and no time to stay and pursue it), that some hurried researcher's guesswork had hardened into this reference-work "fact", repeated until no one thought to check.

Like the evocative phrase "fashion-plate", Ra was a survivor from a far-distant and a very different time — the Jazz Age, indeed, though he was only a child then, and a Southern Black one at that. History still goes very lax in such cases: myth has flourished. Louis Armstrong's birthdate of legend — 4th July, 1900 — was only checked and relocated four years earlier (when someone went and looked it up in church records) in the 1990s. Ra, realist showman, modernist shaman, and not so far from being Armstrong's contemporary, still seems to be Mister Mystery.

Jim Crow — America's *apartheid* — was at its vicious height in the 20s. From the First World War to the mid-60s, African Americans effected the largest population migration in modern history, as they poured into the great Northern cities, Chicago especially. The social and cultural effect of this — still in some ways relegated to footnotes, or shadowy, half-mythologized intuitions — was of course colossal.

Ra's music is and has always been an expression of this turbulent, sometimes hateful, sometimes hopeful world — a world in flux, in panic, no more in touch with its roots than with its inner dreams. His physical body had been weary lately, knocked about by strokes, in pain — but he hadn't stopped travelling, performing, conjuring possibilities.

MARK SINKER



PHOTO: L. L. LAMON



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Recorded live during quartet's tour of Great Britain in January, 1992. Duration 79:31". Liner notes by Richard Cook. Jon Lloyd's quartet was opening for the Bill Frisell band. Not only it was playing on eastlawn farms with the Americans, it stole the show more than once. The release has been funded by the Arts Council of Great Britain.



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**CD LR 210711 SUN RA & his ARKESTRA
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Recorded live in Paris, October 1990. Duration: first set - 50:08", second set - 57:40". "Pleiades is a triumphant compendium of Sun Ra's polymorphous ingenuity". Ben Watson, THE WIRE, June 1992.

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music after film

Riding high in the public's estimation, and less and less in Peter Greenaway's shadow, Michael Nyman has mellowed, but he hasn't lost his edge. Louise Gray talks to the foremost English minimalist about respectability, experiment and an ancient Sumerian sex goddess. Andrew Potheary caught his look.

It has to be said: fame has done an awful lot to improve Michael Nyman's temper. That's not to say that the 49-year-old composer was ever a rat-bag — far from it. The common experience of journalists meeting him has always been of an urbane, serious man who delivers erudite thoughts and opinions marked with a certain arch wit. Or delivered them after a half-hour warm-up speech on the "I don't just write music for Peter Greenaway" theme, anyway.

But now such soliloquies are (very nearly like Greenaway himself) in the past. Today, Nyman displays an almost skittish sense of humour. He has a certificate of sanity — issued by the Monster Raving Loony Party — glued to the refrigerator door of his West London home, and the only discernible symptomatology he displays is a tendency to mutter when the phone rings, interrupting him mid-thought.

These days Nyman has much to be skittish about. In June, Decca release *Time Will Pronounce*, an album that's wide-ranging in its scope and imagi-

nation. The album takes its name from a piano trio which is itself named from Joseph Brodsky's poem *Bosno Song*. Nyman describes the trio as "the most passionate, romantic piece I've ever written". Three other works include the *Self-Laudatory Hymn of Inanna and her Omnipotence* written for the counter-tenor James Bowman and the early music consort, Fretwork; London Brass perform Nyman's Cage tribute, and Virginia Black plays *The Convertibility of Lute Songs*. Like much of Nyman's previous work, *Time Will Pronounce* is not shy of its fascination with the structures and procedures of 17th-century chamber music. Adding his own brand of formal ingenuity, Nyman has come up with what could quite conceivably be a watershed album in his career.

Further releases follow. Nyman has just upgraded the music he wrote for Jane Campion's film *The Piano* into a concerto *Songs For Tony*, dedicated to Nyman's late agent and manager, Tony Simons — "an irreplaceable friend" who died from cancer earlier this year — and scored for the Apollo Saxophone Quartet follows next year. And then there's a collection



translates, he's blunt: "I don't feel that I've been accepted by the cultural mandarins, I don't feel part of the cultural establishment."

He makes a moue gesture. The audience he attracts and delights in — "large and healthy and diverse" — has the "cultural commensars" (concert promoters, South Bank managers and their ilk) perplexed. They expect new music to have a predictable base. Nymman, in many ways a most classical composer interested in the serious consideration of his peers, has in his range of work proved himself anything other than predictable. But then classical experimentalists have never rested easily in any camp.

Nymman remembers one reaction to his groundbreaking 1974 book *Experimental Music* (but will it ever be reissued? — *Ed*), as illustrative of the factionalism rife at all levels of the music scene. "Cornelius Cardew accused me of having made an artificial distinction between the avant-garde and experimental music because they were both representatives of the same bourgeois culture. This is true, I mean that's the kind of platitude that doesn't need to be analyzed. But that divergence has become more extreme. Reich and Glass and Adams seem like they've been accepted into the fold, but they haven't really. They — we — are allowed to be the icing on the cake of a rather hard-line attitude to modernism."

And increasingly, the icing is following traditional patterns. Glass and Adams have been churning out operas, quartets, symphonies and

from Graham Ashton and John Lenehan due this Autumn and entitled *Flugelhorn and Piano*, some music for a grand opening of the Channel Tunnel's TGV Centre in Lille and, with choreographer Karine Saporta, a dance opera called *The Princess of Mon*, which, given that it takes its subject matter from *The Tempest*, has a bit of a *Prospero's Books* (revisited) air about it. And, lest we forget, the "staggering honour and surprise" of a fellowship at his old alma mater, the Royal Academy of Music.

This is, by any working composer's standards, a litany of success, a dream ticket. Nymman can do whatever he wants. The circulars from his music publishers show that every week, a city somewhere in the world has a concert that includes an item of Nymman music. Away from the concert platform and into clubland, Cliff Bragden has just done a club mix of a *Draughtsman's Contract* excerpt (though this isn't a first: unclear samples from *A Zed And Two Noughts* contributed to one of Britain's biggest club hits five years ago). Considering Nymman's early years spent in experimental, repetitive music, such recognition is only apposite. On how all this

chamber works for years, Reich is presently so good-humoured over reactions to *The Cave*, a music theatre collaboration done with his wife, Beryl Korot, that he even smiles away all the comparisons with opera (during its several years of preparation he used to go ballistic over that one). Nymman, too, has inhabited these forms, and indeed, there's no reason why he shouldn't. *Time Will Pronounce* offers a typically vigorous re-reading of what the 20th century views as chamber music.

"This chamber music album is not a way of saying, 'Listen to me! I'm a big boy now! I can write a piano trio which can be programmed along with Dvorak, Beethoven and Mendelssohn!'" Nymman stresses. "It's music that has interested me for a very long time. Virtually none of the performers on the album have been involved with me before, yet they've performed my music with diligence and enthusiasm and they've subsequently put the pieces in their own repertoire. Fretwork, who basically only play music up to the 17th century, don't need to prove anything to anyone by playing me. But they do, they enjoy it. It's very important, you could always write just for




P THE IANO

Original music from the
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The Michael Nyman Band
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your own band or for freakish performers whom you know will always play your stuff with dedication. Not everything I write should be for the Nyman band or the Balanescu Quartet; they need to play Kraftwerk, David Byrne and Alec's own music, too."

Of the four works that make up the *Time Will Pronounce* album, it is the *Self-Laudatory Hymn of Inanna* that dominates. Inanna was a Sumerian goddess whom Nyman discovered by chance encounter with a book on ancient religious texts while playing Paris last year with German chanteuse Ute Lemper. "The translations of these hymns were amazing. There was a fierce pride and self-congratulation in them, which I thought suited James Bowman, he has this kind of swagger. The hymns were also highly repetitive — at the end, Inanna lists all the temples she's in charge of — and I thought, well, I'm meant to write repetitive music."

"Subsequently, I found out that Inanna occupied an important position in feminist thought, and then I found another text that was very sexy and erotic. When I found out that an opera had already been written about her, I thought, what is this time-spirit I've tapped into? There was that sense of synchronicity."

Some ways may suggest another type of synchronicity at play in casting James Bowman as the goddess.

"That wasn't done for any trans-sexual reasons, although with movies like *Orlando* and *The Crying Game* around, you might like to make out a case. You can read what you like into some of the lines James sings — like 'I the queen am I'." He was actually very chuffed by that. He sang it with great gusto. I find the counter-tenor a thrillingly powerful and scary voice. I can quite understand why Phil [Glass] used one for *Akhmat*. It has a very other-worldly quality about it."



Not counting the four ensembles who perform on *Time Will Pronounce*, Nyman's recent history has seen him working with a wide range of people from Lemper to writing for John Harle and the Apollo Six Quartet. It's clear that Nyman relishes the flexibility that such broad working relationships entail. They seem very different to the close, charged relationship that for many years Nyman shared with Greenaway. "The G-word, the G-force," says Nyman. "Our present relationship is at... zero."

Yet for years, Nyman's name and his were inextricably linked. A series of 10 films, including art-house hits like *The Draughtsman's Contract* and ending with *Prospero's Books*, wedded the two together even more closely. Greenaway's lush, quixotic film technique dovetailed perfectly with the minimalist-filtered quasi-baroque soundtracks Nyman provided. The films were witty, informed, post-modern. Decoding them was as hard as reading T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land* without the notes.

Then suddenly, the marriage was over. Louis Andriessen, who provided music to Greenaway's contribution to BBC2's *Mozart* series, was cited as co-respondent. And Nyman, who had led, for as long as anyone cared to

remember a full and independent life on his own, was foot-loose and fancy-free. "The story was that I wasn't particularly impressed by the way [Greenaway] used the music in *Prospero's Books* and I wasn't particularly flattered to have it used, cheek by jowl, with some sound design... you couldn't call it music. Slightly elevated sound effects turned into quasi-electronic music. If it had been done better, I'd have been happy; if I'd been given the opportunity to do it myself, I'd have been happier... I had been given to understand that the music would be used as it is on the CD. I went to the film and just heard some cheap sound effects used in a surprisingly conventional way, when bells were mentioned, you'd hear bells, and so on. It wasn't very sophisticated. As an artist in my field the equal of him in his field, I thought I deserved a bit more respect."

Given this bust-up, it's tempting to regard *The Princess of Milan*, which like *Prospero's Books*, is based on *The Tempest*, as a riposte to Greenaway's movie. "Well, it wasn't actually my riposte," says Nyman. "It was Karine Saporta's. She had done the choreography to *Prospero* and I think she was sort of happy with what happened, but any work you do on a film as lavish as that will tend to get marginalised. She decided that she hadn't said everything that she wanted to say about *The Tempest* and I felt there was a lot of music in *Prospero* that could have a life of its own, on stage."

"Peter Greenaway got to hear of this collaboration... and got a bit miffed that his music by his composer could be used in any other context... even though a lot of it had come from *La Traviata* de Paris in the first place. So I wrote a new score. It's now three hours of music based on *The Tempest* which is a play I dislike intensely because I did it for 'A' level."

The talk turns to other things. Tony Simons, whom Nyman misses noticeably, is the only subject that has him unable to finish a sentence. "He was as

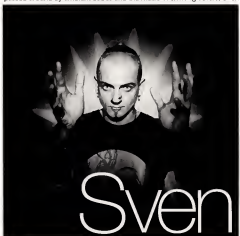
much responsible for my career being where it is as I am, I spent more time talking to him than..." he says, and stops, then picks up on memorializing, describing the elegant slowness of the last movement of *Songs for Tony*. Then he considers *For John Cage*, a punchy, changeable piece for brass which was finished on the day Cage died.

"Would Cage have approved of it? Well, I think he'd have liked its diversity," Nyman says as he moves to pick up a tape. An Italian chamber group has done an arrangement of his *Queen Of The Night* from *The Draughtsman's Contract*.

"They've made it sound really respectable," he says and grimaces, a little self-consciously. □

Time Will Pronounce (Argo/Decca) and the score for *Jane Campion's* new film *The Piano* (Virgin) are released in June. The Convertibility of Lute Strings. For John Cage and excerpts from the Essential Michael Nyman album (Argo) will be performed by the Nyman band, Virginia Black, London Brass and Sarah Leonard at The Royal Festival Hall, 1 July.

arrived in Broxton on Sunday at nine in the evening. The Ambient Tea Party had been going since four in the afternoon. I left about seven o'clock the next morning, the enemy in my head we called consciousness having been emptied out and toppled over by the visual screens which filled every corner of the large squat, the cups of tea and cakes passed around by ambient babes and the music of (among others) Sven



Sven

Väth. His LP *Accident In Paradise* is a record for people who just want to listen ambiently, not interspersed with other musics, not as a break from some hard trance grooves. It's an album for the stagnated Ambient of 93. Its nine tracks slump your body and tumble your head, letting escape velocity to take effect. "Listening to Eno, Sylvan, Czukay, Klaus Schulze, for ten years or more," says the 26-year-old Frankfurt-born DJ/producer, "I always felt how it is a music which is just there, which gets you spaced. Ambient has nothing to do with whales or waves. It can be city music. It's everywhere." As if to insist on this worldly state, the pre-history of the album lies in the portable DAT recordings Väth made during a long trip through India: "I was in Nepal and from Nepal I went to Rajasthan and then on to the south of India on elephant and on camel. I was recording everything. Then I went home and closed my eyes and listened and suddenly I was back in India with my mind." From these audio documentary samples, Väth then went on to build the freeform mood registers of "Mellow Illusion" and the seamless but subtly jarring tempo shifts of sitar and synth on "Sleeping Invention." Väth admires Peter Gabriel's *Real World* project for its insistence on music as a harmonious (some would say naive) union of distinct world musics. "I started making the tracks and it all fits and I say yes, this gives me power to say to myself, it's important to travel. Our next trip is to South America. I see myself as a world human being, I mean I am a German but I felt very comfortable in India. I always say to my people that we are not just doing club music, we are making positive culture, connecting. It's important that we follow the right line."

Perhaps Ambient Music once seemed safely and paradoxically distant from minimalism or rock — the moment of release, say, of Eno's *Music For Airports* — but such an idea now seems clearly naive. In 1993, it's as if the indefinability of Ambient Music, its peripheral ever-receding movement (as compared to rock's drive to localise itself), has turned back to invade itself, rendering it vaporous and indistinct even to its closest followers. In reaction, dance music seeks to recentre Ambient around certain recog-

nizable triggers — whale song, bird noises and waves. But Ambient is the silent assassin of dance, it steals its energy away. This being realised, Ambient has always been confined to its own room in clubs where antennergy can circulate by itself. Certain records are then elected as bridges by which dance and rock can make safe forays in and back out of Ambient's dangerous antimatier state. The KLF's *Chill Out* album, The Orb's debut, recent stuff by the Aphex Twin — this is Ambient to save one from having to listen to too much of the rest of it. But an Ambient Tea Party — this marks 1993 out as the year that Ambient dispensed with supplementary status and emerged as its own empire of the senseless.

Väth is known in England not simply for his LP but also as a producer and as co-owner of Eye Q Records and its (more famous) subsidiary Harthouse. While his LP is the first ambient production to be picked up by a major label (WEA), Harthouse, up and running for two years from Frankfurt, struck up a licensing deal with the indie Techno label Rising High last year. This led to UK availability but that alone is hardly enough to explain why one of the records on the label, "Hardtrance Acpenence" by Hardfloor, is widely recognised as the most important club record of the 90s. The fact is, this record rediscovered (rather than revived) the sound of the Roland 303 bass synthesizer — which means that Acid is back in the UK. Constructed from three different 303 bass lines, "Acpenence" is an utterly compelling, relentlessly building track which sold 25,000 copies when it was released

Väth trance globetrotter

at Christmas. "Oliver Bondzio and Ramon Zenka, the producers of this record, they are real 303 and 909 freaks, very minimalistic, very very minimalistic," says Väth. "The Hardfloor track was actually like a timebomb, not so big in Germany but here because you have your roots in 88, 89, the people, they know the music. But this was a new form of Acid House, very straight and it just builds up and builds up and builds up."

Väth speculates that the acid tempo is able to unite House, "Arkore and Techno crowds, the tribes who splintered outwards after the mythic unity of the 88 and 89 Summers of Love. But he also says, "I hope that the UK doesn't go back to acceeed!" I wouldn't mind so much myself. It would be a laugh. But Väth isn't having it. "This is a serious thing, that people can work with two little machines and make you totally mind-blown. This sound is not a commercial thing and I hope it keeps going."

Hardfloor have completed an album. Their track has turned the European Electronic Community's attention to Frankfurt where other hard trance labels — PCP, P.O.D., Force Inc., Nettwerk, Overdrive — flourish. There's some resentment from Berlin, Väth says, specifically from the Tresor label who started exporting German Techno earlier but are now overshadowed by Frankfurt. Väth knows about stardom. Before Harthouse he was a pop star, with Off (whole) "Electric Salsa" sold millions across Europe but not in the UK) and with 16 Bit (who also scored with "Where Are You" in 1988). His producers were Michael Munzing and Luca Anziletti, who would go on to manufacture worldwide success with Snap.

"I made a lot of money and I learnt a lot, went all over the world with The Cure. But I always had this pressure to make a hit. I never really had my own vision." With his own music and his labels, Väth is able to communicate his vision of Ambient as therapy for a nervous, over-stimulated age. "Frequencies and sequences, they are for your mind. This is especially important for people who never say to themselves, there must be something more to my life than just work. Ambient helps them to see what else there is." **KODWO**

ESHUN

"A load of gloomy piffle."

Alexander Waugh EVENING STANDARD (8/4/93)

"There is less to this music than meets the ear, sadly I don't think it will last."

David Mellor THE GUARDIAN (26/2/93)

"Henryk Górecki seems a very nice man, and it is because of perverse resentment of its popularity that I do not possess the now famous recording of his third symphony."

Stephen Pettitt THE TIMES (3/4/93)

"Hardly the stuff of which gold records are made."

Michael Walsh TIME MAGAZINE (8/3/93)

"Why this really rather dreary symphony has sent all those people into the record shops baffles me."

Michael Kennedy THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH (11/4/93)

"To write down a few static harmonies in long notes takes only seconds. But if played very, very slowly and much repeated they can be made to last for hours...think up some politically correct (in Górecki's case syrupy emotional) title and you've got it made. The musically illiterate love it, because they think they are appreciating modern 'classical' music, and Classic FM and Radio 3 can both claim they are gaining new audiences."

Letter from Fritz Spiegel to THE GUARDIAN (2/1/93)

four years ago, Alhaj Sikiru Ayinde Barrister and Africa's International Music Ambassadors (previously his Supreme Fuji Commanders) performed at London's Borderline. With a 99.9 per cent Nigerian audience, this was not an occasion for compromise. The band, maybe 16 strong, began in a leisurely way at 10 pm. With the club beginning to fill, the musicians deepened the groove. Percussionists (with the exception of four vocalists and a Hawaiian guitarist, all the band are percussionists) jumped offstage to dance as the energy level soared.

After an hour, they were joined by the inventor of modern Fuji music. An imposing man with an awesome voice, Barrister fiddled with a small keyboard, switching on the rhythm function for a few moments, then launched into a new version of his magnificently titled 1988 hit "Fuji Garbage". At 11.30, the grand entrance of a Nigerian VIP cued the entire band into a Bushy Berkeley style drop on one knee. The beat did not falter.

Given the geographical diffusion of West Africans in London, Barrister is destined to turn up in odd places during his English tours and organisational trips. Earlier this year, I met him in Enfield. Curtains drawn to shut out the midday sun, he was relaxing in a suburban backwater to escape from a hectic life as one of Africa's most successful bandleaders and musicians.

Barrister's main mission is very specific. This is his year for drawing white listeners into the intense drum conversation, political critique, aural broadsheet, moral directive and praise singing that is Fuji. "I expect my music to reach to the black race," he explains. "I don't like to be mainly for only blacks. If you see Michael Jackson's music, it applies to everybody. Either you are black or you are white. Why can't I put more effort to gain more white audience? If the white audience now appreciate much about my music, that means that my music will be selling more. Now it has reached a stage where it is supposed to be exposed to the whole world."

This is a candid approach to a problem area which has upset the careers of many other African stars, but Barrister is obliged to be both outspoken and a diplomat. As he wrote in the sleeve notes, his 1983 album *Nigeria*, was "full of down-to-earth messages for all Nigerians, political parties and our politicians in particular." Yet discussing the recent arrests in Lagos of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, he also suggests that Nigerian singers need to be adept in corruption and tact.

"Music in general is supposed to educate," he insists. "It's supposed to talk about something going on in the country and correct information — not excluding the government. The message in any music is very, very strong. If an individual or the government is doing something wrong, then put it on your record. They won't like you to expose them. You don't mind if you are arrested or victimised. You have to say the truth."

With this focus on domestic issues, how can Fuji mean anything to a white, European audience?

The answer is that Fuji cuts to the heart of the drum. Other contemporary African styles may fold influences from fusion, progressive rock, blues or Cuban *charanga* into convoluted, layered arrangements, but Fuji gathers pace, moving like a river in flood for concerts which can last all night.

Barrister is happy to change according to differing expectations. "In Nigeria we play for four or five hours non-stop. If we can be able to play for four or five good hours without tiring, then here, one or two hours, you find

it very easy. By the time they tell you to stop, you still feel like singing."

Now in his forties, he began performing at the age of ten. The roots of his music lie in the sound of the *Were*, the Muslim singer who broadcasts a wake-up call during Ramadan. Barrister devised the combination of this singing style with a large percussion ensemble in 1966. He named it Fuji, inspired by the idea that Japan's Mount Fuji was a "mountain of love".

"My music is mainly Yoruba," he says, "but for the past ten, 15 years, I am able to sing in the three main Nigerian languages, plus English." Fuji is a music for special occasions, which, like Punjabi Bhangra in the UK, has transcended many social and religious barriers. "There's a culture in Nigeria," Barrister explains, "that, if you have a new baby, you invite a lot of personalities to come and enjoy with you. If you are doing a wedding, you want to do a housewarming ceremony, you want people to come and rejoice with you. Anything good."

Barrister's first records were three minute singles, recorded with 28 musicians. Since then, he has made 62 records, slowly introducing new elements such as drums, Hawaiian guitar, keyboard and his own harmonica and flute playing. "I play music to the tone of the environment," he claims. Other Nigerian musicians have floundered within the fickle environment of Britain's music scene. An innovative humorist possessed of powerful convictions and long experience, Barrister could be the man to prevail.

DAVID TOOP

Barrister will be performing at WOMAD's Rivermead Festival in Reading, Friday 16 July.

Barrister

nigerian law-lord



PHOTO JACKSON



Henryk Górecki receiving silver and gold discs for UK sales of his Symphony No.3.

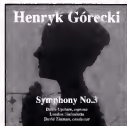
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“We are working with a body-feeling. If I’m working with loudness, or volume, it’s not to work with blood in your ears. I hate that. It’s not to be brutally loud enough to smash everything. I hate that. What I want with loudness is to make room, to make a space for the music so that if you listen to the music, you can stand in it. I work with my amplifiers, just for information, as a third instrument. It’s not head music, it’s a body feeling.”

Caspar Brötzmann’s power trio Massaker is five and a half years old. With four excellent records to their credit (*The Tribe*, *Black Axis*, *Der Abend Der Schwarzen Folklore* and the recent *Koksofen*), drummer Danny Arnold Lommen and bass player Eduardo Delgado Lopez have with Brötzmann pushed guitar rock out beyond itself — to a forceful, formal extreme which probably deserves another name, and certainly demands new ways of listening. Tall, slim, courteous and shy, the man resemblance Caspar bears to the legend of his fiery free-sax father Peter is a will to make a music of his

own, and not have it mistaken for anything it’s not.

“What I like is if people understand, oh Caspar, it burns, it burns. That’s the biggest compliment. Another compliment, when people are talking to me, you are playing one second, two seconds, people know it’s Caspar Brötzmann playing guitar. Bad things? What I don’t want to hear is that we make jazz.” He laughs. “It’s a funny thing, about the situation in England, the English press — people are talking about John Coltrane, and I don’t understand that. Maybe sometimes I think they’ve changed the names, there’s some confusion, and they’re not writing about Massaker, but Peter Brötzmann! Only in England!”

Massaker’s music is not improvised, it’s organised for electric intensity, it happens at high volume because “if you work with a high volume, everything is so sensible,” as he says, in his slightly off-kilter English. There’s more to Massaker than face-slapping racket — it’s just that it’s somehow harder to describe what this is than to experience it. He thinks — and most would agree — that no one else is doing what they do. Bold forays off into uncharted sonic landscapes — sometimes in a crushing foursquare groove, and sometimes not.

He started off as an Abba fan. “But that’s a secret. I was so in love, as a kid! The blonde hair for one week, then after the brown hair. And now there’s a revival! Abba and Nancy Sinatra Beaties, Bertold Brecht.” Hendrix, Jimmy Page and Ritchie Blackmore (I) turned him onto the possibilities of the guitar — “the punk time” turned him onto attitude, self-sufficiency, constant war on limits and intolerance. He loves music “with heart”, from Public Enemy to The Birthday Party, from Bille Holiday to Blind Idiot God (“Their loud songs are very good. The reggae songs are too white! But I like this band. They work with loudness of blood in your ears”).

What Massaker are engaged in is exploration, of the vast terrain open to the electric guitar — with all its drones and over-tones — which rock and jazz and the ordinary avant garde haven’t dared strike out into yet. One link’s obvious — his father Peter, founder spirit of European Freedom, a generation’s wild search for something. Isn’t he part of the reason the son chose this route? Caspar laughs again, perhaps a little weary of the obvious. “Look, there are two Brötzmanns. When I start to play guitar, he hate that, he don’t like that I play guitar. Peter and me, we are just good friends. I lived in the family with my mother and sister, and he was on tour — the relationship is really just good friends. What he is doing in music, it’s totally another world. If you have something to say in music, it’s any way, no matter which direction, you can hear it (...). I lived in a family where there was no border in every direction. This atmosphere was important for all things later, to grow up. This was special, this family, with my mother and sister, to live without a border in your head — a kind of open feeling.”

So other music, non-Massaker music, is all part of one great whole?

“It’s a funny thing. I’m a big fan of scratching, playing records backwards, slow, two record players together — and for my guitar-playing, this is an inspiration. But you try, try, try and you can’t play this effect. But it’s a good inspiration. Maybe it’s strange, but for me I explain it this way — I make my own inspiration to play guitar, it’s a good combination. Because sometimes the music you hear from guitar players is so boring. For 25 years the same thing, except that the technique is much higher, the sound is better, perfect, every millimeter and decibel, you know what I mean, it’s too cool. Sometimes the music is too perfect.”

“We learn from experience to bring the songs to a point, some parts straighter, heavier. For me, older and older, the more experience I have in my work, it’s easier to really bring everything into the music. There’s a difference, first, second, third, fourth — it’s a kind of building. I think very radical, you know.” **MARK SINKER**

Caspar Brötzmann Massaker play London’s Mean Fiddler on 20 July.

guitar explorer Caspar Brötzmann

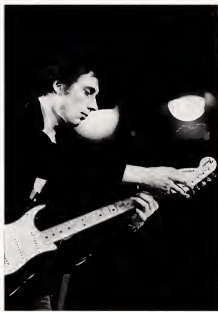


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Company

Company Week — guitarist Derek Bailey's annual gathering of improvising musicians from all over the globe — has a special claim on the attention of *Wire* readers. Not so much because it represents an oasis of purity and excellence in a music world polluted by manipulation and compromise (though it does), but because its brief is precisely the current condition, in all its polluted glory: a world where the communications industry has made every cultural artefact available to every tradition.

This year Derek Bailey has asked two younger musicians to help him organise the event. They are Nick Couldry, noted for his keyboard work in the gothic soundscape group Conspiracy and for his behind-scenes contribution to the renaissance of the London Musicians Collective, and Alan Wilkinson, cult baritone and alto blaster with power trio Hession/Wilkinson/Fell (music described variously as punk-jazz, acoustic-metal and thrash-improv). I asked Nick Couldry why he thought Company Week should be especially relevant to a magazine that likes to trawl every section in the audio superstore — or, as he put it, to “people who are prepared to listen right across the board”.

In reply, he merely had to list the participants who will be joining the three organisers: Don Byron, African-American jazz clarinet modernist and colleague of Bill Frisell's; Andy Diagram, trumpeter in the Manchester pop band James and leader of the irrepressible Honkies (like Conspiracy and Hession/Wilkinson/Fell, the Honkies will be given a special opening spot on one of the nights — a device which promises to kick start the other improvisations at a higher level of intensity than usual); Martin Klapper, the Czech dissident nose-maker and sculptor currently active in Denmark; Thierry Madiot, the French trombone improviser; Phil Minton, famous vocal interpreter of Brecht and Blake for Mike Westbrook; Ikue Mori, the Japanese drummer and drum-machinist (ex-DNA, Zorn, Frith); and Robyn Schulkowsky, classical percussionist and interpreter of Stockhausen and Xenakis.

It may not be evident from the names, but Mori and Schulkowsky are women — Couldry admits to a certain desire to reverse the stereotypes in setting two female drummers next to a

**Ben Watson previews the changes
on offer at this year's improvisation festival**



PHOTO: GERT DE RUITER

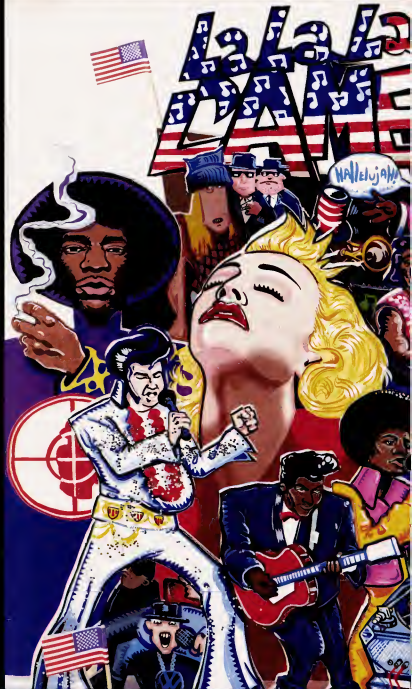
male singer. The idea is to present what he calls “a range of people from different backgrounds who are forced to work together and produce explosive results. Festivals are becoming quite compartmentalized — acts are hermetically sealed. It's interesting to have mixtures on programmes, but far more interesting to mix the actual individuals on the same stage at the same time, rather than just having a variety bill. That's what makes Company Week particularly provocative.”

Whether or not your listening is as wide as *The Wire*'s coverage implies, this is the event where all these musics we think about get crossed and mixed-up and upset: an active response to the transglobal consumerist horrorshow. Be there.

COMPANY WEEK 1993 will take place at The Place Theatre, 17 Duke's Road, London, 20-24 July.



Best things



American Music Club:
by Stuart Harrison





prince

He's threatened to retire before but just in case he IS serious this time, *The Wire* presents Prince on record so far.

Nick Coleman, Paul Gilroy, Ian Penman, Mark Sinker and Ben Watson agree to disagree about the good, the bad and the bizarre in the Royal Collection.

FOR YOU (WEA, 1977)

Still only 19, Prince Nelson Rogers sings every voice in the massed (overdubbed) acappella chor of the stunning opening/title track, then plays every instrument, and composes, arranges and produces every song on the rest of this remarkably bravura debut. at the time (at the very least) it was a better than brilliant one-man pistake of Earth Wind And Fire, the not-yet-Purple falsetto a hilarious parody of Philip Bailey's breathless squeak. Near enough every element he'll later use to multiplatinum effect debuts quietly here, from rockgitar ejaculation to the missed beat that would give "Kiss" its comic-timing hook. So the critical listener's thrown earlier than expected into the heart of the Prince-problem: Is a guy who can deliver a confection like this — with a knowing soft-funk wink and a flirty little spin — ever going to take music as seriously as his audience will always sort of want him to? Showmanship and mainstream emotional manipulation both come far too easy to him. So there's always a touch of hesitation in the most fulsome praise, and a tendency to summarise his talents in banalities — as if to whisper, he can rock, he can groove, he can funk with the best (*but is he really any good?*) **MARK SINKER**

cohorts were pausing for breath. If "Bambi" revealed the location of the self-destruct button he has intermittently pressed since then, the opening cut "I Wanna Be Your Lover" was one of those special tunes that on first hearing forbids the listener to progress onto the rest of the set until it has been played 20 or 30 times. The perfect piano solo on "Sexy Dance" announced his seriousness and studious respect for Funk traditions. "I Feel For You" completed an incredible triple play. **PAUL GILROY**

DIRTY MIND (WEA, 1980)

Okay, the title track begins with a disco throb and fades out in a hi-energy tango, but not since the albums *Mandré* cut for Motown in the mid-70s had black pop been so keyboard-based and hi-tech. This was dance music by someone who understood New Wave starkness. Relentless synthetic chords provided a brittle surface to be penetrated by funky beats. Prince's falsetto squeezed a sexual yelp. News from the bedroom so recent you could practically smell the sweat. "When You Were Mine" documents the attractions of non-proprietary sex with a lust that simply aches. "Uptown" was an explosion of rage against racial and class restrictions. If all this seemed a little contrived, the contrivance was knowing and winning. Compared to Marvin Gaye, Prince's sexuality was a cartoon — but (as demonstrated a decade later by *The Simpsons*) cartoons are not necessarily devoid of critical power. **BEN WATSON**

CONTROVERSY (WEA, 1981)

After the buzz stirred up by *Dirty Mind*, *Controversy* might have been the LP to pitch Prince into full crossover effect. It was a slightly baffling work at the time, and remains so — it's all over the place, the work of someone who doesn't know which persona to plug. He was trying to be something for everyone (everyone but himself) — an MTV Everyman, a synthetic bricoleur — and the New Wave sex-strut, apocalyptic boogie of "Jack U Off" and "Ronnie, Talk To Russia" now sounds horribly dated. "Sexuality" and "Controversy" don't live up to their titles, or much beyond their choruses. The musical texture is one-dimensional, one step behind the seamless mesh of funk-rock-pop that *Purple Rain* would finally consolidate. But the things that click here do hint at the shifty shape of things to come. "Annie Christian" remains one of his spookiest tracks, ostensibly a twisted tweak at Fundamentalist denial of life, it radiates out waves of generalised purple paranoia ("I live my life in tax cabs..."). All the future shocks are here, in embryo, but he hasn't yet shaped a vernacular to deliver them — and the calls to "New Breed Revolution" are very banal. Seduction is the only thing he makes seductive on *Controversy*: the best track — because the simplest — is probably "Do Me, Baby", a blue blue-print for all the jazzy ballads to come. Pointer for the future: the JONI headline on the back sleeve. **IAN PENMAN**

1999 (WEA, 1982)

Controversy had worn its mockapocalyptic leanings on its sleeve, and what you could decode from the title song was Prince's readiness to count himself one more component in US regression-hysteria. You couldn't help feeling he relished being bad news. The same tone infects *1999* from the off: never has impending catastrophe sounded like such a, well, blast. This is the first double, and finds him stretching into long synth-funk workouts, whose length also allows him to unspool his troubled mind. This personal apocalypse — as in "Lady Cab Driver" — is far more convincing than, for example, his nuclear paranoia, and there are hysterical remnants of a macho Soul Man persona which don't sound altogether healthy, and which it would take the *Purple Rain* movie narrative to exorcise. When he broaches sex he does not sound an altogether happy boy (compare this silky tone with the unfettered silky *JOY of Parade*). He still hasn't found his sound, and the mekzink-funk pump and plod of tracks like "Automatic" and "Let's Pretend We're Married" now sounds like the tail end of a style. But there are moments of classic pop-soul here that will not date. "I was dreaming when I wrote this,

deep purple days

PRINCE (WEA, 1979)

It's a pleasure to scrape off more than a decade's worth of hype and hubris and return to a time when Prince was a more disciplined figure than he is now. Rhythm & Blues — 70s style — was still the dominant genre on his second album. The whimsy and bombast that would intermittently undermine his future creativity were evident, but they were crossed with and overshadowed by classic dance grooves that conquered black radio while Chic and

forgive me if it goes astray" is still one of the great opening lines. Pointer for the future: the fusion of troubled eschatology and a "mutha fuckin' good time" on "D.M.S.R." **IAN PENFAN**

PURPLE RAIN (WEA, 1984, record/film)

Too used to 'realistic' gangsta-rap in film and record, we're likely to find plenty wrong with Prince's first film these days (though less, perhaps, with the record that came with it). The plot's an insult to the intelligence, to the race-politicized (females leads are milky coffee at best), and to women in general (underwear's as much as they ever get to put on). Wendy and Lisa are exploitation superbabe sextense and — simultaneously — astonishingly apt and excellent musicians, but this proto-notgrm! symbolic conflict is somehow made to matter as little as each ripe and idiotic guitar-spunk spurt. Even the beat isn't really real! — the synths backing "When Doves Cry" are more Depeche Mode than Blues People. He calls his group The Revolution. He'd have called it Utopia, if Todd Rundgren hadn't got there first: only in a World Made New could the warning riles of Black and White music (from politics to the light metal ballad) be so surely footed, lovingly broken, and *nothing result from it*. Prince is not concerned to tell you how the world is — not even the world in his mood-up head. He's looking forward to what it could be: seize the moment, be unafraid, cut your hair the way you want. The Reality Principle is the history of American Showbiz itself, from Jason to Judy Garland, through Beatles (in Rundgren's studiobrewed version) and Hendrix: "I 983 (An [Ethel] Merman) shall Turn To Bel." See also "Walk This Way" — HipHop owes him more than it dare admit. **MARK SINKER**

AROUND THE WORLD IN A DAY (Paisley Park, 1985)

Something went very wrong here, though dismissing it as his Sergeant Pepper says more about mumbusk! critical desperation than about this hard-to-like record. The Lucy-in-The-Sky mindwander cover-art, the fingercymbals and "wonderful trip through our time" lyrics do of course nod to psychedelia, but his carnival-entourage of crossbred freaks (lollipop empty-headed men, women as muscled musician-technicians in microskirts), together with the bleak party-now-before-you-die subtext suggest he was after something more like a Pop Art Seventh Seal "America", "Pop Life" and "Condition Of The Heart" — the three undeniably great songs — only underscore the stodgy nothingness of the rest. Miles termed him a Duke Ellington for our time, but Ellington usually had the lower (or anyway less precious) aspirations. Prince often overloads the forms he opts for — never more so than here. Themes carried over: sex as identity-dissolving salvation, artifice as palpable proof of grace, an oblique sense of threat and dread. Themes added: Beat-ish pan-Globalism. No surprise that audiences didn't get all this — he didn't either (particularly not his own possible role in it). **MARK SINKER**

UNDER THE CHERRY MOON (Paisley Park, 1986, film)

Dismissed at the time as a frivolous throw-away, *Under The Cherry Moon* is in fact the vital visual analogue to *Parade*, Prince's masterpiece. Shot in glorious black and white and set in a timeless retro-Riviera, all champagne and art-deco, it had Prince (Christopher Tracy) and Jerome Banton (Tricky) cast as two rascally giggles-on-the-make. Christopher Tracy makes the mistake of falling in love, plays the game for real and is shot dead by the irate father (menacingly played by Steven Berkoff). Whereas *Purple Rain* had mythologised Prince's musical combination of black and white in parental terms, *Cherry Moon* is untrammelled narcissism. The scene where he plays piano to the enraptured dowagers — his eyes shining, ruff flouncing, camp to the max — is an excessive self-portrait that si-

multaneously celebrates and satirises his function as superstar. Mixing sacrificial lamb and Rudolf Valentino in a single parable, *Cherry Moon* teeters on a line of self-parody that is enduringly fascinating. Note the self-conscious placement of Miles and Joni Mitchell album sleeves in the bedroom. The delivery of "Kiss" — in a vintage car, after a lover's triff — makes mincemeat of every other pop video, an artful parody of trembling emotion that brings tears to the eyes. Not since Frankie Lyman had the black male been simultaneously so devastated by lust and seductive in expression. **BEN WATSON**

PARADE (Paisley Park, 1986)

Pauline Kael, reviewing *Purple Rain*, compared him to Springsteen — presumably the only contemporary performer big enough to have manifested in the 65-year-old film reviewer's consciousness in a weird way it's not such a bad stab — certainly, if pop in the 80s became the collusion between roots-truth and persona-play, then it's Twin Jokers were the Prince and the New Jersey pauper, the little God of Fey and the beely Boss of Bluecollar, both working overtime to fashion something "true" from Stadiumrock Spectacle. Perhaps this makes *Parade* Prince's Nebraska. Before, he'd played the Social Realist in black music entirely for fun (fun-as-liberation being the only politics he seemed really to believe in). Now the freeing power of imagination was rammed full-on into treacherous indirection: if you really can remake yourself, here's the sound-trout of the pitfalls, a music that's skurred, all shape-shifting fogs, nihilistic and non-revealing surfaces, intimations of madness, weakness and failure. Thin, strange tunes flite up out of turmoil, dance-beats are funeral, songs don't resolve. The seams show arrangements of magnificently witty genius ensure that. The third in his take-your-fantasy-for-reality tryptich is thus easily the best, compulsive in its witchy draw. His flirty-silly gay gospel falsetto is now eerily tragic: how much the record's consciously an AIDS-parable is unclear (certainly snot in his nature), but while he still knows it's imperative that we dream, he's here more Puritan American than you'd expect, in his recognition that dream-choices breed real-life consequences. **MARK SINKER**

SIGN O THE TIMES (Paisley Park, 1987)

Maybe it was something in his porridge but everything clicked for Prince the morning he did this double. There is a tempered richness about the album, an overwhelming bloom of rationalization, gratifying to those of us who believe in the ghost of Prince's authorship, and irritating as hell to those who have him down as a cipher of his times. Even more galling for the opposition, however, is the transparency of this music's genius: the way you can hear why it's good. Everything flows from the songs: if this is Prince's most "literary" work then we should shut up and read already. 'Cos this is classical, baby, like The Beatles "Starfish And Coffee", "If I Was Your Girlfriend", "Dorothy Parker", "U Got The Look", "I Could Never Take The Place Of Your Man" — this is Prince on the rake in Penny Lane, which is tough to hear I know, but preferable to both a hole in the head and the tricky junk on *Lovesexy*. So what if he wanted to be picaresque and paint Sheena Easton like Fra Angelico: nobody'd done that before, and made people dance like gibbons. **NICK COLEMAN**

THE BLACK ALBUM (bootleg, 1988)

Prepared for release and then cancelled, this became the bootleg of the 80s. It was transmogrified into *Lovesexy*, which softened its rhythms and defused its obscenities. Prince is one of the few artists to follow up Jimi Hendrix's experiments with slowed and speeded tape. Here, his slowed-down voice becomes a parody of gangster macho psychoses while his falsetto begins to sound like a speed-up gender is integral to placement of a voice's emo-



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tional pitch (listen to a Little Johnny Taylor record as if it's a woman singing; it sounds assertive, not broken-up with emotion) and here Prince plays games with it like never before. Singing like Bootsy and indulging the infantile regression of George Clinton's "Pot Smoking Tots," the *Black Album* cemented Prince's connection to the P-Funk underground (the next year Paisley Park signed Clinton). Urgent, sexual, plastic, funny — one even suspects Prince decided to make this occluded classic a bootleg item just to watch the accountants squirm. **BEN WATSON**

LOVESEXY (Paisley Park, 1988)

Lovesexy was generally felt to be something of a saccharine disappointment after his sorties into the demonic side on *Sign 'O' The Times* and the bootlegged *Black Album*. This hearing doesn't stand up to scrutiny, however; *Lovesexy*'s ostensibly uplifting paens showcase a Prince who sounds more "spooky electric" than he does on the ostensibly "nigga-tive" but actually more routinely funky *Black Album*. *Lovesexy* is a 'white' album, and the tone is redemptive, and the codeword is Positivity. But 'code' is the word here, for encoded within the overall "positivity" is a lot of ambiguous metaphysical revisionism. The core messages of self-acceptance are threaded through with a phantom chorus of dissenting voices, squeaks, whispers, contrary strophes. The best tracks — "Positivity," "Anna Stesia," "Gorn Slam" — rank with his best work. The album is conceived as a whole, and it works as more of a piece than the really quite patchy *Sign 'O' The Times* — which became too quickly installed at the top of the Prince pantheon (partly because people were looking for proof positive of an individual Soul genius, for a *What's Goin' On* for the 80s). The beautifully layered sound of *Lovesexy* is a significant element in itself — listen to "Positivity" on headphones and hear the literal veils of sound blow and ruffle around this bizarre self-analytical trip through the world of the Soul-Man-considered-as-a-split-subject. *Lovesexy* inaugurates the post-*Sign 'O' The Times* era, in which each new release will be greeted by critics with knowing indifference damned with faint praise: oh well, just another seamless Prince album. Pointer for the future: Prince is nude, rather than naked, on the album's cover. **IAN PENMAN**

BATMAN (Warner/Paisley Park, 1989, record/film)

Roped in to give some class to a corporate masterplan, Prince only lapsed with "The Arms Of Orion," a ghostly ballad co-written with Sheena Easton: a tune worthy of Andrew Lloyd Webber (there can be no greater abuse). "The Future" shows that Prince was as aware of Batman's retro-politics as the creators of the graphic novel *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*. "Systematic overthrow of the underclass/Hollywood conjures images of the past" (a critique initiated by Marx and Engels, natch, in *The Holy Family*, or *Critique Of Critical Criticism*, 1B44). Sly Stone, Wild Cherry, Marc Bolan, Free all abound around in the mix: it's all utterly silly, but you nevertheless want to dance down the street to it. Production is shinier and juicier than of yore, but still edgy and fresh. "Lemon Crush" is sublimely regressive sex-fixated gibberish worthy of Little Richard (there can be no greater praise). **BEN WATSON**

GRAFFITI BRIDGE (Paisley Park, 1990, record/film)

A curious and scrappy effort, saved by the devil-may-care creativity of Prince's production values. "New Power Generation" — reprised at the close — huffs and puffs with all the stylistic retro-politics (*It's deo vu ol' over again!* — Ed.) we expect of funk, while "Love Machine" has Morris Day and Elisa coo-

ing sexual innuendo against Prince's future-soul layerings. On the fade Candy Dulfer's six sounds completely disoriented, the party well out of bounds. As the double-album proceeds, the groove becomes impossibly scattered, as if Prince wants his syncope to tell every story at once: an instrumental like "Tick, Tick Bang" is all over the place, yet works by virtue of Prince's king-of-the-fools let's-all-party dementia. "Melody Cool" roots all this excitement in the gospel of soul with an appearance by the fabulous Mavis Staples. Each time Prince shakes up the ingredients they fall down a different way, which is why we love him. Only the vacuous sentimentality of the title track lets the side down. **BEN WATSON**

DIAMONDS AND PEARLS (Paisley Park, 1991)

A new brace of popses but no new pop, tough *D&P* was a considerable up on the tired and unemotional *Graffiti Bridge*. The New Power Generation? Not, we may assure ourselves, an attempt by the pious to democratize his grooves but the sensible way out of the solo-in-the-studio cul-de-sac, which must have bored his little boots off by then. Still, despite the extra swing generated by that big fat drum Prince is only functioning on three-quarters oomph as a writer here. So though we get the fabulous scooting "Cream," Rosie Gaines's and, hey, Afro-metre in "Willing And Able," this is the sound of limbering up. Limbering up for what exactly? Squiggles on a postcard, please, to Prince's accountancy crew and the ghost of Jil Jones. **NICK COLEMAN**

✶ (Paisley Park, 1992)

This is the work of someone completely in control of his (musical, lyrical, cultural) idioms. Even what might initially be thought "filler" funk-outs and ballads ("The Continental," "Wanna Melt With U," "The Flow," "Sweet Baby") are heavenly, casually complex. Prince is now a supreme manipulator of timbre. This is what distinguishes even his simplest ballads, and puts him fully beyond the reach of those pretenders who stick to the same old Soul Man moans. The four sides of this latest apocalypse (derbim with angels, Arabic script, typhoons, serpents, rivers of blood, birth trauma, endorphins, Barbarella, the crown princess of Caro — you realise this is Prince's own singular, modernist, millennial gospel. As with *Lovesexy*, he converts the daemons of Doubt into a shapeshifting celebration. Idiosyncratic — or better say idio-syncretic — Gospel, in which past doubt and future hope fuse in a raised voice, a prayed god. Dig the musical texture of bells, discreet scratching, 'secret' chorus, sample ("Tramp"), sitar, the drum machine's imitation of crashing waves or cracking whips. "And 2-pether we will love thru ol' space and time". This record begins with a classic soulman assertion of identity-aseros ("My Name Is Prince") — less assertion, in fact, than ferocious, desperate pleading! and ends with a nominal apocalypse ("When I reach my destiny/That's when I'll know/That's when my name will be Victor"). The Name as reinscription, renvention and oral rediscovery, not a 'given' but a Beyond — it's an old, old Black (history). Prince has come full circle from his hesitant beginnings as an "Everyman for everybody" (to Ian) "Everyman for himself"; it's a story of Black discovery in miniature, it's exemplary, and it's almost 2 damn funky to bear. **IAN PENMAN** □

Prince plays Edinburgh's Meadowbank Stadium (29) and London's Wembley Arena (31).



national



George Clinton: Uncle Jam
Wants You

John Corbett wonders what makes a music an *American* music — and considers whether jazz should be allowed to stand isolated from gospel, P-funk or the legacy of Charles Ives.

treasu

there's a sbody image in my head that I can't seem to shake off: it's Spring, 1990, in Oakland, and interstellar *avator* of 1960s free-percussion Rashied Ali — once known as Raymond Patterson — saunters up to the stage at Concepts Cultural Gallery, his dark jacket emblazoned with a brightly shining American flag. He swings around, removing the jacket to reveal a flag of equal proportions on his white T-shirt, his pants suspended by a starred-and-striped belt and — if my memory hasn't ornamented the event — a huge brass belt-buckle in the shape of an American eagle. As if to burn the image into my cortex, by extreme contrast this jazz patriot then proceeds to play a set of duets with embittered Vietnam vet violinist Billy Bang, whose profound distance from any sort of hand-on-heart Americanism I've always seemed to hear echoed in the ferocity of his playing.

Perhaps some irony too subtle for my callish eyes and ears was at play in Ali's interweaving of Islam, free-jazz and American emblems, or maybe it was only Gulf War/Support For The Troops mania. But for me, what this persistent memory sparks is a set of associations and contradictions between nationalism and music — specifically, between jazz and the United States — that are at once long-running and very current. We're all familiar with the various clichés — the ones that sing the changes on the line, jazz is America's classical music. For the party line, check out Grover Sales's 1984 book *Jazz: America's Classical Music* or Dr. Billy Taylor's cleverly titled 1986 essay "Jazz: America's Classical Music." Or, for that matter, go back to the same argument being beaten to death in Sidney Finkelstein's 1948 book *Jazz: A People's Music*. But the easy identification of

nation state with musical idiom doesn't stop there. We are repeatedly informed that jazz is America's only true indigenous music, and in even more extreme cases, that jazz is America's sole offering to global culture. As John Rockwell summarizes the notion, "... there are those who have argued that jazz has replaced classical music as the serious musical expression of our time, or that it constitutes America's only serious artistic contribution to world music."

It seems to me that these arguments can be dismantled from two opposing directions. First, jazz is obviously not purely American, just as European classical music isn't unadulteratedly European. As Austrian composer/fugelhornist Franz Koglman nicely explains: "What is the great European tradition? For our ears it sounds extremely clear and pure, but it is a mixture of Byzantine, Jewish, Greek and Italian influences. Very similar to the beginning of jazz, a mixture of African music, European instruments

and harmonies. If you think about the diminished chords at the beginning of *Tristan Und Isolde*, you can hear it in 'All The Things You Are.' Both cultures are great mixtures."

On the other hand, if we accept that jazz, even as polyglot as it happily is, is nonetheless inextricably linked with the United States, then the problem is this singular status it has, as America's national musical pastime. Is jazz more American than gospel, for instance? If it is, why is it? Ask yourself: could the deep southern sanctified swamp music of the Staple Singers have happened anywhere but the US of A? What about Blues? Soul? Funk? Think of Funkadelic's *The United States of America Eats Its Young*, what makes this dance-worthy national critique less "American" than Count Basie or Charlie Parker? What are R&B, R&B, or CBW, if not indigenous American music? How about Native American music? What about the mentions of Concord, Central Park and the Fourth of July that figure so prominently in the work of American composer Charles Ives. Ives who so heroically jettisoned the baggage of European art composition that was holding back his fellow Americans at the turn of the century? And while we're at it, how about his successors Elliott Carter, Harry Partch, Ruth Crawford, Henry Cowell,

Morton Feldman, Carl Ruggles, William Grant Still, John Cage? There's a question we still need to pose, about identity and possibility in any kind of American music, and in 1959, Cage asked it: "Why, since the climate for experimentation in America is so good, why is American experimental music so lacking in strength politically (I mean unsupported by those with money [individuals and foundations] unpublished, undiscussed, ignored), and why is there so little of it that is truly uncompromising?"

By all means let us assume that jazz is to be taken seriously, and at the same time that classical music is not dead in the water but continues to be vibrant as well. Fine. The question is, can one really talk about a *notional* American music? What continues to be seen as so distinctly "American" about jazz? If jazz is to be equated with America, what happens at the other end of the hyphen that holds apart the words "African" and "American" as in jazz is an "African-American" music? To be sure the last decade's redirection of so much jazz back into the retro-bop mainstream is related to a

Billy Bang:
Viet Vet

PHOTO: AME KLEBY

res

certain kind of hardcore nationalism, be it red, white and blue—or black. And now that we have a sax-toting fellow in the White House, the implicit institutionalization of jazz at the state level—nd of its connections to sex, anti-institutional politics, and the avant-garde (all features that were probably still apparent when Cecil Taylor demonstrated his music for President Carter)—seems assured. The music has been mobilized as a call-up to national and racial pride and as a marker of successful integration and achievement. Jazz musicians: Africans that America can be proud of! (The irony being that America should take any credit for these achievements.)

The "nationalization" of jazz relates to an idea of music-as-tourism, a way of reducing jazz to a folkloric art, suitable for travelling indigenous culture shows to display the hearty, healthy cross-fertilization of America in the melting pot of American popular forms. The supposedly "unhealthy" cross-fertilizations that Wynton Marsalis refers to as the "dilution" and "aesthetic denigration" of jazz in the "cult of the primitive" and "jazz-rock" (which he

has described as "a peculiar aesthetic androgyny that has one thing in common with hermaphrodites—sterility"), he seeks to combat with a combination of "craft" and "tradition." In other words, jazz as repertoire, jazz as costume, jazz as folklore, jazz as national/racial resource.

Of course, musical nationalism such as this is by no means restricted to mainstream America. Even in the context of a global vanguard, consider the circulation of clichés that link free improvised music with the supposed national character of their native lands: the humour of Dutch improvisors, the energy of German improvisers, the eclecticism of American improv-

isors, the anality of English improvisors. And of course the introduction of folk elements was always mentioned as the primary feature that distinguished Eastern European improvised musics from their Western counterparts.

Back in the States, it is clear that today the argument about jazz revolves around the acceptance of its status as a national folk treasure. Aaron Copland (who recognized in Lennie Tristano's late-40s experiments with free improvisation "something that has been developed here that has no duplication abroad") laid out in the early 50s a three-point plan for the development of "an indigenous music of universal significance": "First, the most important, second, the composer must have in his background some sense of musical culture and, if possible, a basis in folk or popular art, and third, a superstructure of organized musical activities must exist—to some extent, at least—at the service of the native composer."

Hey, cool! As a citizen of a country you simply research your native popular musics—just like Bartok and Kodaly and all those Siberian improvisors did—and apply to your local arts council. Elliott Carter tried this plan, but found it too constricted. "We wanted to be 'American' and to make it very clear to everyone that we were American composers, so we attempted to use various folkloric and popular music elements to make our music have an 'American' character," he told Allen Edwards in the early 70s. "But, in my own case, I soon began to realize that this was unsatisfactory—in fact, that just being an American was already enough, that whatever American character my music has would be the character of myself making my music, and that it didn't matter what choice I made except to write the music that I most wanted to write. That, I believed, would be American music."

There's the rub, and it rubs the wrong way: jazz is not an unchanging American folkloric national treasure but an open art form. It is far more than just popular music historian Henry Pleasants' "growth within the American popular idiom of a music

good enough to be taken seriously." It is a music that consistently (and by its nature) ignored boundaries, even the ones that define the genre "jazz" itself. For example, how do you categorize Anthony Braxton? "In America we don't value our lineage of mastership," Braxton said recently. "Our country has so much talent, but at the same time we don't seem to take advantage of it. And in terms of geo-political dynamics, this might not be something we can afford to do. The Europeans and Japanese, if you want to learn about American culture you have to go there! They have studied the music very seriously and we're lost in arguments like, 'Is it jazz?'," and continued (invoking names that time has tragically caught up with in the interim), "I mean, Sun Ra is in a wheelchair now. When is he gonna have a decent life? I don't think it's gonna happen on this earth. John Gilmore, he's sick. Time is going by. Jimmy Guiffre, he looks frail. Sal Mosca, one of our great masters, nobody knows about him. Even my PhD students never heard of him. I mean, I love my country, but we sure feel we can waste a lot of talent and it's not gonna affect us."

Stars and stripes forever—and all that jazz

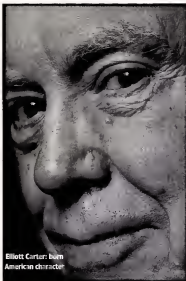


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Elliott Carter: born American character

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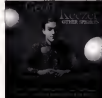
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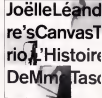
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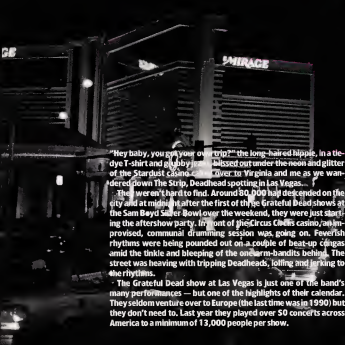
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the neo

Every year The Grateful Dead, standard-bearers of the 60s rock underground, play Las Vegas, centre of the American Dream. Laura Connelly (words) and Virginia Lee Hunter (pictures) went to watch what happens when opposites attract.

and the



"Hey baby, you got your own trip?" the long-haired hippie, in a tie-dye T-shirt and plummy jeans, blissed out under the neon and glitter of the Stardust casino. I passed over to Virginia and me as we wandered down The Strip, Deadhead spotting in Las Vegas.

They weren't hard to find. Around 80,000 had descended on the city and at midnight after the first of three Grateful Dead shows at the Sam Boyd Silver Bowl over the weekend, they were just starting the aftershow party. In front of the Circus Circus casino, an improvised, communal drumming session was going on. Feverish rhythms were being pounded out on a couple of beat-up congas amid the tinkle and bleeping of the one-arm-bandits behind. The street was heaving with tripping Deadheads, jolting and jerking to the rhythms.

The Grateful Dead show at Las Vegas is just one of the band's many performances — but one of the highlights of their calendar. They seldom venture over to Europe (the last time was in 1990) but they don't need to. Last year they played over 50 concerts across America to a minimum of 13,000 people per show.



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ead

The Grateful Dead — guitarists Jerry Garcia and Bob Weir, drummers Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann, bassist Phil Lesh and keyboardist Vince Melnick — are an American institution, with their own self-supporting economic sub-culture. From their wayward beginnings, circa 1965, living in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district, heavily involved in the 'purposeful hedonism' of the Beat (second) generation, Ken Kesey's Acid Tests and playing their blend of country/folk/blues/jazz/rock at Trips festivals and anti-Vietnam concerts, and mingling with the finest of the era's rockers like Jimi Hendrix and The Who, they've become the second largest grossing touring rock band in history. Last year, they took \$31 million from ticket sales, beaten only by U2's colossal Zoo TV tour. The estimated sales from the Vegas shows alone nears \$3 million. They've sold some 10 million studio albums in their 28 year existence. Their merchandise yields an estimated \$20 million per annum. Last year \$10 million's worth of neckties designed by Garcia were sold. 80,000 tie-dye T-shirts have been sold at \$30 each, and their videos, now totalling five, also sell in the tens of thousands. And that's just the Dead, not counting the group's various satellite projects — the Jerry Garcia band, the Rex Foundation which donates money to various charities and other worthy concerns, and Mickey Hart's world music/Planet Drum explorations.

The Dead are a classic example of a homegrown 'mom and pop' business that has evolved into a multinational empire, virtually without regard to the corporate rock industry, at least latterly. Up until the mid-80s the group had released around 20 albums on one major label or another, but their record sales never reflected the true extent of their fanbase or phenomenal touring success. Then in 1987 they released *In The Dark*, after a seven year break from recording, much of it typically spent out on the road, and the record's timely combination of rock nostalgia with a contemporary FM radio/stadium rock mix down captured the heart of mainstream America. It's turned out to be a lasting romance (to the extent where the group can now sell out nine straight nights at New York's Madison Square Garden — one sell out show was all they'd managed previously).

But the success of the Dead is not just about their music. Inventive management and promotion has certainly exploited much of their potential, but at the time of *In The Dark*'s release, the increasingly constrictive atmosphere of Reagan and Bush's America had inadvertently created a hidden mass audience of suburban liberals, post-hippie achievers and post-grad dropouts looking for an alternative to unrepentant capitalism — for these disaffected middle-American communities The Dead offered the perfect escape route. Their improvising, their experiments with electronics, their hippie sentiments — peace, love, and a sense of quiet rebellion against conservative political rhetoric — hadn't changed since the 60s but were suddenly back in tune with the spirit of the times. And now, with the advent of the Clinton administration and its relatively liberal values, the Dead's philosophies might almost be socially acceptable — Vice President Al Gore even wears Jerry Garcia neckties.

Sitting at the back of the massive Sam Boyd stadium, you can barely see the band. A 50-year-old woman sitting next to me, her eyes covered by a floppy tie-dye sun hat, hands me her pair of compact binoculars. Nothing to see except six greying men in shorts and T-shirts. No extravagant fashion statements here. They start "Back To Tennessee" and she gracefully ejects herself from her chair and starts gently bobbing to the tune. "It's like a giant tranquilizer, better than therapy," she says when the number finishes. She sits there sucking on a needle-thin joint held with a tiny crocodile clip. "My kids think I'm mad," she says. Half way through the number cheering starts from one side of the open air auditorium. As it spreads, two figures dressed in cream become visible. Soon, 40,000 people are applauding a couple just married and celebrating their wedding at the show.

My neighbour tells me she goes to 12 or 15 Dead shows a year, but Vegas is the best. Unlike the majority of the Deadheads she's staying in one of



Above: American beauty under the sun. Below: Waiting for a miracle

the hotels (most of them park and sleep in the adjacent hotel parking lots, as we did). You might expect the Deadheads to appear incongruous among the synthetic sheen of the casinos, but Vegas embraces everyone. It's the third year the band have played the city, and it's one of the few places left that can accommodate their fanatical entourage and turn a blind eye to its drug lifestyle. Vegas doesn't care who visits its casinos, drinking dens or brothels. From the nylon-clad suburban housewives playing the 25 cent one-arm bandits, to the immaculate Japanese businessmen placing \$25,000 minimum bets on the blackjack tables, all have the potential to feel the ecstatic thrill of winning, the hollow disappointment of losing, the agony of trying to walk away.

Las Vegas, once a godforsaken desert valley, has been transformed into the gambling mecca of the 20th century world. First put on the map at the turn of the century as a service stop for the transcontinental railway, the city's infrastructure soon built up around power and water piped in from the Hoover Dam at Lake Mead. The casino entrepreneurs began moving in from the 40s onwards, providing food, drink, and 24-hour entertainment and gambling. They were soon followed by mafia-related racketeers like Bugsy Siegel, who supplied money and low-life frisson, and millionaire Howard Hughes, who lent the town vulgar, new-money respectability. It is now a huge corporately controlled entity that attracts 20 million visitors each year who lose \$10 billion to the casinos alone.

Musically, "the town with no clocks" has become the heart of American show business, the Broadway of the West where anyone from Liberace to Frank Sinatra, Willie Nelson to Dionne Warwick, is elevated to glittering, larger-than-life status via lavish stage productions. The city still boasts that it has more live entertainment on any given night than anywhere else in the world. In spite of everything, there couldn't be anywhere more appropriate for the Grateful Dead to play.

Just as Vegas is no ordinary city, The Dead aren't ordinary rock icons. The group claim no responsibility, and offer no philosophy or social guidelines for its extended family. But by offering their fans an open, egalitarian communal experience, they have created their own unique society.

Each Dead show follows a pattern — first set, break, second set, drum solos and end — yet their set list is always unpredictable. For dedicated Deadheads, hearing a favourite tune in the set is akin to winning on the one-arm-bandit (there is even a Deadhead hotline that posts "Vegas Odds" as to which songs will be played). This year's Dead show was like any other — but the parking lot attendance had doubled since last year. While 40,000 sat in the stands, another 40,000 participated in the Experience outside. Numerous Deadheads wandered around with one finger in the air asking for a ticket (in Deadhead speak, they were "waiting for a miracle"). The after-show partying was important as the show itself. The lot erupted into percussion circles, dervish dancing, and hawkers selling off what remained of the day's goods — warm beer, burritos, fruit and an endless supply of be-dye goods. A mass of bodies lost in their own grooves sucking on balloons of nitrous oxide or tripping on LSD among the VW Combos and customised school buses.

As much as Vegas is a fantasy land and living community in the middle of the desert, so too is the Grateful Dead show. Both are a chance to party, get high and move through a timeless world. The Deadhead crowd may have been geographically divorced from Vegas's Strip, yet walking into Caesar's Palace casino hall amid the bright lights and the noise of the gambling machines, you're oddly reminded of a Dead show. It's one huge headtrip of pleasure and excess. You enjoy it as an individual — you enjoy your neighbour's trip or winning. Just as there are unrestricted liquor, prostitution and gambling laws in the city, the Dead society is a law unto itself. Its most common vice, drugs, is largely ignored by the police (with 40,000 stoned individuals they wouldn't know where to start anyway). They're both an escape, a dream that can be bought. Put your 25 cents into the slot machine or pay your \$25 for a ticket — either way, you're waiting on a miracle. □

deadcerts

Biba Kopf trips through 25 years of recorded Dead.

It goes without saying that The Grateful Dead have long been a law unto themselves. They've survived for more than 25 years without a decent lead singer, though between them they can summon up a barbershop quartet's worth of passable harmonies (which isn't to imply they've ever seen the inside of a barbershop). What with a bassist habitually AWOL from the beat and two guitarists utterly alien to the notion of a power chord, their rockouts are appealingly dreadloid. They still claim never to have made a studio record that really captures what they're about. Yet, even as they feel their music's only fully realised in concert, we agrophobes, to whom four hours in a field with upwards of 40,000 Deadheads is unrelieved purgatory, would gladly settle for recorded consolations.

Besides, almost from the off, the Dead sought unique means of translating the psychedelic experience of their mid-60s concerts onto record, fusing freakout jugband blues with Cage-like random experiments and electronic tape treatments. Their second and third albums *Anthem Of The Sun* (1968) and *Aoxomoxoa* (1969) stand as rare, successful examples of experimental rock fusion. On *Anthem*, they overlapped and distilled hours of live recordings into a song suite that replicated the sensory dislocation of acid better than the customary SF feedback drenching. Their then keyboard player Tom Constanten went even further on his successor *Aoxomoxoa*, his mood enhancements the warps through which songs like "St Stephen", "Mountains Of The Moon" and "China Cat Sunflower" achieved classic status. The *Live/Dead* double set that followed in 1970 retranslated the songs for concert, transforming "Dark Star", "Saint Stephen" and "The Eleven" into a 40 minute brainwave surfer. It also showcased how Garcia could turn his anaemic vocal lot to advantage on the blues. This version of Gary Davis's "Death Don't Have No Mercy" is as chilling as his later take of Elmore James's "It Hurts Me Too" (*Live Europe 1972*) is affecting.

Quite sensibly, they didn't try to repeat — leastways not on official releases — the acid churned beauty of *Live/Dead*. Though they contain a smattering of bona fide classics, the song albums *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty* are marginally disappointing insofar as they seemed to succumb to the zeitgeist (largely acoustic, vocal harmonies). But in the mid-70s they recorded a trilogy of studio albums for their own label (then Round Records, now Grateful Dead Records), which established the pattern of Dead music for years to come. The excellent *Wake Of The Flood* (1973) is possibly their greatest studio record. Its open-ended songs are satisfying in themselves, pregnant with future possibilities for extended live improvisations. Just so Blues For Allah, whose consummate interweaving of drift rhythms and desert rose mystifies they'll rewardingly replay, each time slightly altered, until the end of time. *From The Mars Hotel* (1974) also contained its share of live favourites, but the studio versions soon rushed and incomplete. They re-signed to a major shortly after, resigning themselves to (unsuccessfully) competing with airbrushed FM rock. Hindered by Garcia's death's door stepping in the mid-80s, it seemed like the Dead were a spent force, until "Touch Of Grey" — backed up by a witty animated promo clip — crosswired them with the MTV generation in 1987. Later, browbeaten BPM refugees from Rave and Techno would discover trance-formational qualities in the deceptively paced Dead rhythm matrix. Further, unlike the BPM lockdowns, the Dead trance-formations took listeners out of themselves and elsewhere, opening them up to virtual worlds of breathtaking alien beauty. The song-excess *Infrared Roses* (1991), an edited and studio processed collection of live improvised passages, teleports you deep inside such Deadzones without passing Go. □

It's an attractive idea. There in the great fastness of American music, in the still, tranquil centre, stands not a singer or a rapper or a guitarist but a trumpet player. He has a lot on his mind. Great issues such as integration, education and development crowd in on him. He's not a publicizer or a businessman, he says, but he can't help but get pressed into these roles: he would rather, though, liken himself to the coach on the bench. Best of all, he likes to be out there playing, taking it to the bandstand, criticizing by doing it himself. Then setting it down for all to hear.

"Documentation," says Wynton. "Yes. That's your only defence. If you're a manufacturer, you have to manufacture. Production is the heart of everything. That's the issue, action. You can talk — talking is fun. I like to talk. But documentation is the final word."

Spoken like a good CEO. And Wynton is surely heading the firm. In ten years, the trumpet-playing Marsalis has squared jazz's move from secret underbelly of American music to corporate force, commercial proposition. As the music industry became multinationally huge in the 80s, jazz unexpectedly played its part. Of course, Wynton doesn't sell like Michael or Janet or Prince. He doesn't go top 40. He's not on the radio all that much. He can't be glimpsed between Aerosmith and Stone Temple Pilots on MTV. Kenny G outshirts him by several to one. But Wynton leads, and his example dominates discussion of jazz business and jazz music in the USA.

For those of us who observed and lived through some of that milieu in the last decade, it's been an extraordinary story. Marsalis emerged from the ranks of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers at the beginning of the 80s, a chubby teenager with a formidable agenda to go with his talent for playing the trumpet. Once he'd signed to Columbia, along with his brother Branford, his records and the promotion that went with them began altering the perception of jazz as it stood, not with the hardcore following but as it appeared to the infinitely larger audience outside. Awareness of jazz as a great American music began to swell and evolve. The new presentation created an ambience of scholarship, commitment, music for music's sake, even as it was being marketed more persuasively than before.

Wynton didn't have much choice: if he was going to do interviews and photo sessions and the rest, then he was going to stand up for jazz. His father, a pianist-teacher who'd scarcely strayed from his New Orleans home, raised a family of intensely articulate, hard-working boys. Jazz has produced a number of dynasties, but none as all-conquering as the Marsalises. At a time when such eminences as Miles Davis were still growling that they hated the word "jazz", and most were looking to find some awkward rapprochement with the rock/soul audience, along came this bespectacled, stocky man with a New Orleans accent who said, no. Jazz is the music we should be playing. We're going to play it, and we're going to succeed with it.

It was labelled as the return of hard bop, neo-conservatism, nice suits and respect for the tradition. But it wasn't so simple as revivalism. If the music restored the qualities of the hard bop instrumentation, it didn't really sound like something that had been cultivated from hard bop language. Marsalis assembled a school of performers who seemed to arrive from nowhere, all well versed in jazz lore as well as in playing their instruments. After a while, it was clear that these guys could play anything. As record followed record, Wynton was documenting his own *Americana*, a take on the tradition that aimed to be as multifarious and all-inclusive as jazz itself. It was a bigger game than anyone had really imagined at the start. If his first bands sounded like oblique descendants of the already-oblique Miles Davis groups of the early 60s, that shell was soon shucked in favour of Mingusian ensembles, Ellingtonian voicings, New Orleans survivals that could embrace Jelly Roll Morton and Joe Oliver. It looked able to spread in any direction, but always within jazz. If Branford chose to go adventuring with Sting and Danny Devito, and tap into a populism that would eventually net him the job of bandmaster for the *The Tonight Show*, Wynton has kept faith with the raw materials and masters of jazz. A parallel career in classical mu-

In ten years, Wynton Marsalis has established himself as the major force in the rediscovery of an American jazz tradition. Richard Cook talks executive strategy with him. Cool cut by Stanislaw Kulpa.





majesty

sic has been neglected in favour of his first calling, although he now has a couple of new classical records awaiting release.

It's an autocratic, single-minded agenda. What he is doing, he says, is "reclaiming a lot of territory." There's nothing left in jazz to expend pioneer spirit on. Marsalis would rather be taking the music back to the boardrooms and meeting grounds where the culture business stands or falls. They say you can't fight city hall, and Wynton would probably agree. So he's working with it instead. "We have meetings and stuff — banking people, real estate people, the mayor's office. It's a citywide effort." Specifically, this is all to do with his role as an artistic director of Lincoln Centre's jazz programme.

Publicizing the music is integral to everything that Marsalis does, yet he would rather absolve himself from any such burden, disingenuous as it can sometimes sound. "I'm not a publicizer for the music. I do publicity in interviews, you have to talk about what is important to you. What else am I gonna talk about, my latest album? Check it out. That's all I can say. I'm not a spokesman, I just comment on my feelings about the music and the direction it's going in and my opinions go into the pool with all the others."

With 17 albums under his belt (and, he claims, ten more in the can awaiting release), his records are beginning to seem like an intimidating mass. Since Marsalis's work-in-progress philosophies are as intensely applied as, say, Steve Lacy's or Anthony Braxton's, creative profusion can seem like awful hard work for us listeners. Records like *Hot House Flowers*, *Crescent City Christmas Card* or the three *Standard Time* collections might be separate side-tracks, but they're approached with the same fierce dedication. A brilliant man won't talk down.

The most recent albums, the almost overlooked *Blue Interlude*, which is his most Ellington-soaked creation to date, and the new double CD *Cit Movement* (Grot New York), pursue a course that's lighter yet paradoxically more challenging to absorb. Writing for a septet, Wynton flexes all his muscles, never letting time and harmony get too comfortable, paring improvisational space down to ensure that nobody gets sent to sleep by a soloist. Both sets are generously laced with his sly wit, detailed shadings, characteristics that inform his writing as much as his own playing. But if you had a hard time with the high craft of *J Mood*, these records won't necessarily beckon you in. *Cit Movement* is charming and bristling, but the sheer bulk of the thing (some 122 minutes) seems unrelieved. If Marsalis secures much of the jostle and spit of works by Ellington or Mingus, his players are arguably too super-competent to characterise them in the manner of the old music.

"A lot of the conception of what is modern is so conservative. The image of a rock star kicking down a microphone, being rebellious, that's old, man, that's 50 years old!"

With all their personal problems, they come to the music, they want it to remind them of something in their personal experience. A dehard fan is gonna like the specifics, but jazz has a swing to it, the blues, a conception of dialogue that makes it interesting to a person that's not really interested in the music. When you start taking away the elements that are attractive to the public, then you're left with someone playing a 30 minute solo. I grew up on jazz concerts and I never really got into it. In modern jazz, the musicians didn't seem to say that much — it's hard to expect a lot of people to want to hear that. But music went in that direction when musicians were being overtly influenced by writers. If you let something written by critics

determine the value of something you grew up in, you're making a very tragic mistake."

Players actually change the way they play because of a bad review? "No, not the way they play, the overall conception, this idea that 'jazz music will grow into the concert hall' — Duke Ellington wasn't thinking about that, he was thinking about the Savoy Ballroom. If you're a musician, you have to make sure that your music actually comes out of people. If somebody says, I can't hear melody when you're playing, I get tired after 15 or 20 minutes listening to the same thing. We can say, that's because you don't know how to concentrate on the thematic development. Or we can say, maybe we need to have more elements and shifts in our music so that it doesn't sound boring. You don't have to throw things away to progress."

"It doesn't mean you have to get a certain haircut or... a lot of the conception of what is modern is so conservative, so clichéd. The image of a rock star kicking down a microphone, being rebellious... that's old, man, that's 50 years old!" Wynton shakes his head and laughs.

"Critics give some musicians the only intellectual framework they ever had. I see that in a lot of the younger musicians — great talent, but no confidence in their intellectual capacity. A lot of my time teaching is spent telling them that it's alright to think. Don't let them tell you you lose your soul if you think."

In his own playing, Wynton has steadily enhanced a technique that was impressive to start with. At a London concert a couple of years ago, he delivered ballad playing which this writer for one will never forget. With a tone that now stands somewhere between steely and brassy, he's become as recognizable as — well, perhaps not the great old trumpet masters, but it's as sound as particular as anyone playing the horn today gets. On his records, even in the densest ensembles, you can pick out his lucid timbre and rather idiosyncratic vibrato straight away. It's not a sound that can make sense out of very broad gestures, though, and he can sometimes seem like a fish flopping on the bank when spotlight on the wrong stage. On Michael White's records, where the clanniest-leader sets up some beautifully spirited modern N'Orleans music, Wynton's solos sound grotesquely overdone.

"Sometimes," he reflects, "you don't even think, you just hear it, it comes out. Sometimes it's a struggle. There's never one way. Once, on a record, on 'Delfeayo's Dilemma' on Block Codes, I can remember playing that solo — after all these years, I can remember that solo coming up. When I was playing it, I could tell it had a certain internal logic about it. I just knew. In the band we always talk about this — if you play something sad, you lose confidence in it. You can keep playing, and it gets worse. There's so much going on, you can't think. Don't think about chord changes, only hear melodies and rhythm. If you can't hear the harmonies on a song by the time you come to play it, it's too late, because it's going by so fast. It has to be reflex action. It's easy to get lost in the form. Sometimes a half a beat will shift and, oh! You can't rely on anything. You have to just... hear."

"People are ready to be Americans, and that's why it's time for jazz," Wynton told a *Downbeat* interviewer last year. Statesmanship is a lonely calling, which might be why Marsalis is always undercutting and turning away from such a role (publicly, at least). Whether you see it as selling an image or "addressing the conceptual situation", though, statesman he is. At 31, he has no time to slow down.

"I don't get spread that thin, I always worked a lot. I had a job since I was 12 years old. I like to be busy. I know a lot of people. I don't get nervous or upset. If I get mad, I just cuss, and that's it. I don't carry that around with me. To me, it's all fun. I'm very serious about music. But that's what I do." □

Cit Movement (Grot New York) is so far not scheduled for release in the UK. A best-of compilation, *Resolution To Swing*, will shortly be released here by Sony UK, and Wynton is also playing several festival dates.

MORPHINE : GOOD



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Invisible jukebox

KING OLIVER

"Wa-Wa-Wa" from King Oliver's Dixie Syncopators (Ace of Hearts)

This is nice. I like this [He sings, conducts and stomps his feet.] I've heard the song, but I have no idea who it is. I'd almost say it was Jabbo Smith, but I'm not really sure. It's not Louis Armstrong. No, but he gave Louis one of his first jobs.

Oh yeah. That's a pretty good hint — it's King Oliver. Okay. Yeah. I like that. I just like the whole idea of this music — the sound, the way it's played, and just the spirit of the music basically. You really have to capture your era, and this is a really good example of what Dixieland came to later be. But this is a much purer form. And it's tricky too. Do you think it's important for a jazz player to listen to music from this period?

Oh yeah, definitely it's important. These are things that are essential. These are the basics roots of jazz: trumpet playing — you have to listen to King Oliver, to Jabbo, Beiderbecke, Louis Armstrong, any of those guys. I use it as reference material and try to somehow incorporate that into what I'm doing. It's essential that elements of early jazz are embedded in your mind because the only way you are going to create something new is to be familiar with what has already happened. Because if you're not, you may think you're creating something new and actually you aren't. Are there connections between this music and the music you play in *Brass Fantasy*?

Well, there is a very good connection in that we are both trying to deal with contemporary music. And I think that some people, especially now in jazz, have forgotten that they have to be contemporary. Our brass thing is kind of an extension of the New Orleans traditional

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear.



PHOTO: JACQUELYN

lester bowie tested by Philip Watson

Lester Bowie is one of jazz music's great mavericks. A founder member of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, and leader of the boisterous, piano-less 10-piece Brass Fantasy, trumpeter Bowie has been a musical provocateur for over 35 years. Famous for his on-stage lab coats, two-pronged goatee, theatrical soloing and pugna-cious intelligence, Bowie was brought up in St Louis but moved to Chicago in 1966. Since then, in addition to his

work with his own groups and the AEOC, he has played in Jack DeJohnette's New Edition, recorded with such players as Archie Shepp, David Murray and Taj Mahal, and lived and played in Nigeria with Fela Kuti. Most recently he appeared on his namesake David Bowie's CD, *Black Tie White Noise*, emphasizing his continuing interest in popular music and songs. His latest album, *The Fire This Time* (In & Out), is a live CD recorded in Switzerland last year.

Marching brass band. My father was a marching band director and all my uncles were in marching bands, so I've got that in my blood. So there is a connection between all these elements — especially in the spirit that the elder musicians had.

GURU/DONALD BYRD

"Lounge" from Jazzmatazz (Chrysalis)

It sounds like Miles, but this ain't Doo-Bop. Is it Donald Byrd? Yeah, but I don't know who the rapper is. I'm not familiar enough with their styles to know one from the other. It's *Guru from Gang Starr*. He describes this project as "an experimental fusion of Hip-hop and jazz." This is a good effort to try to make some sort of fusion, but I don't really think it comes off. You've really got to put a little bit more into it. It kind of sounds like the jazz players are playing down a bit. I'm in favour of fusion, but I don't believe in playing down to anyone. I think you should put just as much creative energy into a fusion as you would to anything else. More could be done with the form, something should be added. You can't just layer — put a solo over a rap track and then call that it — you've really got to put some music in there. *Brass Fantasy* have a tune that's an experiment in this area, but it's quite different from this approach. There is rapping, but there's an arrangement and everything. We actually put some time in thinking about how it was going to be voiced, what kind of feeling it was going to have. And we wanted to do it without a guitar, without a backing track, without any scratching. But you gonna feel all of the grooves you would feel if you had heard a rap record. That's the way I approach those kind of things. For me, when I experiment with other

forms, it's a take-off point. I mean, we play Willie Nelson songs, but we play good arrangements of Willie Nelson songs. It's not half an effort that ends up with something half-arsed.

And Donald Byrd?

I've been a Donald Byrd fan for a long time. I mean, I knew about Donald Byrd before I knew of Bird. And when Bird died I thought they were talking about Donald Byrd. He used to play like these really long lines — Donald Byrd was a monster. I mean, he could play a line that would go around the corner and then meet itself coming the other way. But then he had a lot of problems with his chops, and he can't play like that anymore. But at least he's still making an attempt to make a connection. Whether it's successful is another thing.

HANDINGO GRIOT SOCIETY/DON CHERRY
"Musubalanto" from *The Handing Griot Society (Flying Fish)*

Okay. Well it sounds like Don Cherry on trumpet. Don Cherry, to me, is one of the most underrated musicians. I mean, Don Cherry, first of all, is music. This guy is just a one big piece of music. His whole being is music. Now, people speak about technique, but that has only a minor part to do with music, because Don has done more for trumpet players, more for opening up the music, than any of these guys who can play the concertos. So it's not about technique, it's about who really contributes. I mean, after Miles Davis, it was Don Cherry who really freed up the language of the trumpet — it gave us the impetus to really go and search out our own ways. So his influence has really been felt in anybody who is playing so-called free jazz on trumpet — they're coming from Don Cherry. He's really made a strong contribution and he's been really neglected. People always see him as some sort of fucking joke or something, but Don Cherry's a total musician, and a true traveler. Now, you talk about fusion — Don Cherry does real fusion. He takes the elements and he really puts a spirit into the music. Don Cherry's like traveled the whole world — he's the guy you really need to talk

to about fusion, because he has really done it successfully. He opened up the whole world music thing. Great job done, great job. As always

BYRON FERRY

"Rescue Me" from *Taxi (Virgin)*
That almost sounds like "Rescue Me" man. Wooooahhh. Yeah! Fontella [Bass] has got to hear this. I got to get this. It sounds like David Bowie, but I don't know who it is. [He sings along.] It's Byron Ferry and I think this song means something to you doesn't it? Oh yeah, it sure does. I must have played that song about six million times. And that's a nice version. I mean, you know, things like that. I can respect. He takes a familiar song and comes up with a different version. He puts something into the music. That kind of stuff I like — to do a song like that in an original way to me, is just great.

That was [first recorded by] my first wife, Fontella Bass, and I was her musical director. I remember when we first came to England, my name was never mentioned in the papers — they just wrote "Fontella Bass was accompanied by a coloured trumpeter." Those were the first printed words about me in England. But that record was very popular, and still is.

You've always had a very positive and open attitude to pop music. Well, it didn't get to be pop music because people didn't like it. For me, as a jazz musician, it's not about what I play, it's about how I play it. So I take influences from all directions. And in pop music there's the appeal of the song, the melody, the rhythms — there's something there that can be explored. And I think the artist has an obligation to reach the audience. And when I say that I don't mean go down — I'm trying to bring people up to my level, not condescend. But I've never had anything against pop music. I like pop music, and I don't see anything wrong with it.

PHILIPS DAVIS
"Agitation" from *ESP (Columbia)*
That must be Tony [Williams] on the drums. And that's Miles — after the first note, you know who it is. Miles Davis was one of the greatest trumpet players who ever lived

And I get particularly angry with people who try to defame him. Especially now that he's dead. I heard Wynton [Marsalis] say something about Miles recently and next time I see Wynton somebody may have to hold me back from slapping him upside his head. He's said things about Miles that I just can't understand. I was always brought up with the idea that if you can't say anything good about the dead, you don't say anything. Now what's this guy talking about, accusing Miles Davis of treason. Who is this guy, who has done nothing yet to even approach the level of anything Miles did? [In a recent issue of *Downbeat*] he said Miles was like a general who had sold out and gone over to the other side. That was the straw that broke my back. I was already mad and didn't like what he was doing, but then I thought man this guy's really out to sabotage the music for real.

After that last interview I've started to seriously question just what his involvement with this music is. I think it's detrimental. I think there's something evil somewhere. Because it's getting out of the realm of just not knowing or just being young. This is like a deliberate effort to sabotage the development of the music. I mean, if that's the way he's talking about Miles, he must think I'm a piece of shit. Wynton was in my band when he first came to New York, but now he doesn't come around me. I think he's scared of me or something. You said once that you think Wynton is using the concept of the tradition to destroy the tradition. Yeah, to destroy it. He's using a partial concept of the tradition. If you're talking about the tradition in jazz, what about the tradition of innovation, creativity, moving forward, being contemporary. Is that not part of the tradition of jazz? What about the tradition of having and maintaining an individual voice. Tradition has to be taking the music as a whole.

What we were doing in the 60s was trying to be different — that's the whole idea. All the guys then taught us to be creative, so what were we going to do — come up with an imitation of them? We had to come up with an alternative — that's the way we thought it was done. You try

to make a legitimate contribution to the extension of the music. That's what those guys, Miles, Cecil Taylor, Ornette, Coltrane, Bird taught us. Be different. As Max Roach once said to Jo Jones, you can't join the throng until you sing your own song. That's always been the way it goes.

Cats today should be finding out some new notes, some new ways of playing that I don't know anything about. I'm a grandfather — what I am doing being the revolution? There should be some guy out there, 25 years old, playing things that I can't even imagine. Wynton, for instance, has the technique — if he applied it — to play some remarkable things, but he's just wasting his fucking talent.

So I take it you don't want to hear the Wynton track I was going to play you?

Oh well, no, we can talk about that.

WYNTON MARSALIS
"Allegro; Cadenza" from *Tomas's Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra/Paiffarmonia Orchestra/Esu-Pekka Salonen (CBS Masterworks)*
You can stop it there — I've heard this before. I'll tell you about the whole conspiracy thing. This is how Wynton has been tricked himself. You see, he's been mislead. Now, Wynton is an excellent musician. I think Wynton could be the greatest classical trumpet player that ever lived. But they tricked him. They're using him too. They're tricking him out of that because I don't think they want him up in there, being that good. You'd be surprised — there's a good racism in classical music. Those guys give him a hard time — they try to sabotage his performance, the orchestra will half play their parts, the conductors will be trying to fuck with him. Plus the vibe is always funny and when you're trying to play music you don't need a funny vibe — you don't need guys in the orchestra looking at you funny as if to say, who is this negro here, who does he think he is? But if Wynton was really strong, if he had nerve, if he was really a man, he would fight all that shit and stick in there and become the greatest classical trumpet player — ever. He should be developing orchestras, (continued on page 71)

great Lost recordings

In our regular feature on neglected records, Hopley Glass recalls Olly W. Wilson's *Cetus*, winner in 1968 of the First International Electronic Music Competition, and details the last days of a great American experiment in electronic music.



Somewhere around the mid-60s, American Electronic Music went into a taison. Defined and kept pure as it was by a fiercely narrow academic clique, no new generation really emerged to inherit. The very fact that a competition was felt necessary and appropriate proves something had gone wrong, and that certain people sensed it. The drama of development had suddenly to be manufactured — because those involved had forgotten why they'd started down this particular route, or how they could find anyone to continue, into the next generation. A competition is always the sign of the death of the tradition it celebrates.

The death of a music is poignant. It can also be comical, as evidenced by the busy care of this record, and the sleeve notes that so farily and long-windedly lay out the purposes and pretensions of the competition runners-up, all long vanished and forgotten.

It's a pregnant moment, preserved in amber. The music survives, or thinks it does, on the fading margins of US academia, but even here — in the person of the prize winner himself, Mr Olly W. Wilson, today Professor of Music at Berkeley, California, — are some of the things that would by the mid-70s effectively kill it.

He certainly deserved to win. *Cetus* is a very striking piece of music. It's all drama, fierce and pitiless. Its metallic tones are shenks of intensity, its contours are lively, urgent and immediate, and its abstractions are confrontational rather than recessive. Perhaps knowing that Wilson's

African-American makes me listen harder for engagement, urgency, risk, and loss in this music — perhaps such knowledge influences my judgements when it shouldn't. Anyway, something in it very much pokes right up through the becalmed arrogance of American electronic institutional experiment, 60s-style.

Nonetheless, this is the institution that was doing the judging. George Balch Wilson (then director of the University of Michigan Electronic Music Studio), with Vladimir Ussachevsky and Milton Babbitt (both directors of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Centre) were the three judges. Ussachevsky and Babbitt — with Otto Luening — controlled access to the then-legendary RCA synthesizer Mark 2, the pioneering composition machine, built in the mid-50s, and one of a tiny number of synthesizers and studios dominating this whole area (two of the five runners-up were also working from Columbia-Princeton, while another two were from Warsaw's Experimental Studio of Polish Radio).

RCA Mark 2 was set up to allow composers to pursue the basic post-war vision — to build a new music from nothing, free of all instrumental constraints, deploying any imaginable noise, and (moreover) to turn music into a heroic scientific exploration of all possible sound-relationships. With the help of these noise-generating machines, composition could travel anywhere, and stay calibrated and analytical. Controlled journeys into sound-as-pattern were the objective, a research into patterns — of pitch, duration, attack and timbre — learnedly and painstakingly shaped by quasi-mathematical means: serialism, in a word.

Babbitt is something of a joke these days. Mr Becalmed Arrogance, the very picture of the desiccated, anti-emotional, ivory tower male-as-technocrat. A 1958 essay in *High Fidelity* magazine first made him notorious, when he argued that the layman audience were there to follow the heroic explorations of the artist-composer, not to impose their own agendas or taste. The editors titled it "Who Cares If You Listen?"

In private a Jerome Kern buff and occasional Tin Pan Alley tunesmith, he seemed then to be using his seat of control to evangelize for this utterly narrowly-set version of music's future, turning music-facilities into dogmatic serialist cadres of composer-disciples. Wilson, by contrast, allowed his serious, public music to be influenced by jazz — even setting words by revolutionary black nationalist Amiri Baraka at one point. Jazz certainly cares if you listen, and Wilson's work with electronic sound-texture in *Cetus* is partly remarkable because it acknowledges the very thing which dogmatic serialism wanted to grow beyond — the lay listener's own emotional responses and decoding systems.

Babbitt and his clique were convinced that history and the progress of aesthetics were on their side. A whole, smart, algebraically-minded generation got trapped in abstract explorations, the dots on the page and the number games implied. In some ways almost as utopian as free jazz, this music flourished through its own willed inflexibility, its lack of a language to describe, or share, or debate and contest its benefits. For a while, they held sway — until Walter/Wendy Carlos and later Kraftwerk swept them away. Now a historical cuneo, its dreams in tatters, it abides in artefacts like this, rich in untapped promise, but also almost unspeakably alien. □

Monday Mixtape

- 6pm-7pm
 Dave Gregory
 Soul & jazz
- 7pm-8pm
 David Freeman
 Classic soul, blues, R & B and jazz
- 8pm-10pm
 Helen Mayhew
 Happy hour 8pm-7pm followed by dinner jazz. The Tower Hour reviews London's top 20 best selling Jazz CDs on Fridays 6pm-7pm
- 10pm-2am
 David Freeman
 For the discerning listener - includes artists such as Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Gerry Mulligan
- 2am-6am
 Mark Sebastian (Fridays, Dave Gregory)
 Non-stop jazz, soul & urban contemporary music

Saturday

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 Mark Sebastian
 The blues, soul and jazz weekend starts here
- 10am-1pm
 Paul Jones
 London's premier blues show
- 1pm-2pm
 Robbie Vincent
 The "Feel good" factor
- 2pm-7pm
 Jazz '93
 Contemporary jazz with the latest releases and London's jazz chart
- 5pm-8pm
 Dave Gregory
 3 hours of quality soul from vintage to the latest imports
- 8pm-10pm
 Dinner Party Jazz
 2 hours of uninterrupted dinner jazz
- 10pm-2am
 Alex George
 "Deep" - contemporary jazz
- 2am-6am
 Patrick Walker
 Non-stop jazz, soul & urban contemporary music

Sunday

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 Mark Sebastian
 Blues, soul and jazz
- 10am-12pm
 Peter Young
 Classic soul, blues, R & B and jazz
- 12pm-2pm
 Robbie Vincent
 "Jazz Flavours"
- 2pm-6pm
 David Freeman
 Blues & Boogie
- 6pm-7pm
 Ian Anderson
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Print run

In The Fascist Bathroom: Writing On Punk 1977-1992

By Greil Marcus
Viking (HBRK 16.99)

As a companion volume to his *Sex-Pistols-as-Situationists* meditation *Lpsbok Traces*, this is a collection of the many pieces pioneer rock critic Greil Marcus wrote on the movement which revitalized his own interest in rock's possibilities in the late 70s — pieces for *Artforum*, *The Village Voice* and elsewhere, which acted as a sketchbook and more for *Traces* over the years of its gestation, and now return in the form of notes and queries he had no space to include in the earlier book. Perhaps we should pause for a moment, and think what it is that causes so intelligent a writer to turn back so obsessively to a moment that time ought to have buried.

In the most recent piece, "yggg" (September 1992), Marcus points to moments in recent songs by Nirvana and Bikini Kill which he reads as parodic replies to the "bimodal imposition of 60s nostalgia." But you could argue they're angry at punk nostalgia as much as the 60s Punk in the UK — for the generation that followed — is a problem made worse by an insistence on the Sex Pistols as the origin, the absolute and unique founding negator, the shouted "no" that started everything. Whether commentators are bored or proud or ashamed of 76/78 seems to matter less than the ways they continually close the period down, reducing it to personal experience they insist that they were there and that we weren't, which justifies their never doing anything again (what's the point, we went as far as possible to go) and their cynicism (why are you bothering when we failed?)

If Marcus avoids the contempt that many reserve for such ex-

Under review this month, Greil Marcus's long-awaited collection of punk commentaries.

punkers as Burchill and Parsons, it's because (by missing out on the actual London events?) he's an example of how punk lives on and beyond commentary. The fourth piece, "End Of An Antichrist", shows him entering and being transformed by punk at the very moment when those who were there' insist it ended (Winterland, San Francisco, 1979, the last Pistols show). Instead Marcus sees a new beginning, lives it as "a new kind of free speech." If you take this story seriously, Marcus says, it has to be examined as both the very definition of life lived as a moment of becoming, and as a redemption of other similar (and dissimilar) utopian moments in history. The Ranters in 1649, Henri Lefebvre and Tristan Tzara in 1923, May 1968: such moments, which insist on absolute freedom (and collapse under the weight they challenge), are also retro-actively rescued by Punk from history as written by the victors — in this case, the "punks" that bailed out.

Punk "becomes" the eternal no which is impossible to suppress — even as its former advocates dismiss its rediscovery — in Leeds, LA, Seattle, Warsaw — as mere revival. But still we who come after punk (and after what came after) hear the Pistols today not as prophecy but as a Kings Road

karaoke for sad did dinosaurs. Trying to capture the shock of "a new kind of free speech" in which anybody, the adddress and the unlikeliest alike, can speak with an "absolute denial of self-censorship", Marcus makes most sense when he writes on the post-punk American band Pussy Galore in 1987, singing "fuckfuck" and more. Utopian speech, free speech, he writes, "should go far enough to put you into Tipper Gore's shoes. You're forced to ask: should this be allowed?" But in the same piece he pushes the idea even further. It's only after you deny the enemy in your skull that you discover what you want to say or not and whether it's worth hearing or not. At no point is there any guarantee to this process. It's all risk.

Directing its anger at those in power, Punk can be seen as the ethical value system it really was. It's this that attracts Marcus to those cadet-branches which sought, for example, to leave the sexual conservatism of traditional rock/roll as far behind as possible. Punk seemed to push rock 'n' roll's freedoms as far as they would go. But post-punk went further. One of the paradoxes of rock/roll, he says (writing on The Au Pairs), is that women are captivated even as they are divided by its male freedom (taken in the 60s to stand for universal liberty). What Marcus goes on to call "the post-punk avant garde" — Gang Of 4, The Ramones, Essential Logic, Liliput and Delta 5 — all set out to build a new community on the ruins of traditional rock. Marcus's idea of their music as "conversation and argument" (rather than "spectacle and private feeling") embodies a new value system, one which defines for him the democratic potential of rock at its best, even as these mixed-sex groups make the rest of normal pop seem as alien as

a "one-sex movie".

But post-punk draws its power from the margins. After 1983, it drops away completely, its promise now embodied only by the utterly marginal Leeds group The Mekons. They register the price paid for living after the revolution. In the Reagan era, pop — by contrast — carries on, spreading wider and further until it becomes the machine for producing consensus. Reality becomes social spectacle, the electorate is a giant stadium audience. In 1980, Marcus can still locate rock 'n' roll's resistance to this social spectacle in the music and performance of Springsteen. But by 1984, Reagan is quoting Bruce in his triumphant election campaign, relying on that very margin of resistance to fuel his own reactionary utopia.

The 80s were bitter years for a Berkeley Free Speecher like Marcus. In 1986, he listens to The Mekons and hears them as "a dramatization of what it means to feel an exile in one's own country." It could be Johnny Rotten speaking through him. This pessimism doesn't let up. The 1990 piece entitled "The End Of The 1980s" sees his beloved figure of community as a "public conversation" now transformed into "a foreign language" that he can't bring himself to speak. He concludes, "I'd say truthfully, that 'the country is dead, and only a revival of public violence — a refusal of circumstances that, as in the first days of the civil rights movement, physically interposes itself between corrupt institutions and their everyday functions — can bring it back to life." But this piece is filed under the heading "Three Premature Endings." Reagan has gone and it's too early to say what he took with him and what he left behind.

KODWO ESHUN

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reel to reel

One of the more beneficial cultural spin-offs from the rave revolution has been the revived interest in the image/sound interface, the way in which the patterns and rhythms of music can be translated into, or aligned with and impersonated by sequences of visuals. Techno and ambient sounds demand this as a prerequisite, a simple narrative structure cannot convey the textures and intricacies of, say, an Aphex Twin tune, while the conventional pop promo is unable to cope with the sheer abstraction of Techno. Ultimately there is no standpoint, attitude or hook within the music for a film-maker to connect with, it's just there, an objective, rational collection of sounds to be twisted any way you want.

The result of this contradiction between music and film, and the subsequent impasse, has been to allow the next generation of promo-auteurs, ie, computer artists, to emerge and take centre stage. Trained to manipulate and manoeuvre machine-generated images through 3-D landscapes that could have wandered in from an Electronic Arts video game, people like Colin Scott and Marek Pytel (who were responsible for the ground-breaking *Stalker* Humanoid video), and obscure German outfits like *sfs gfc*, have stepped into the shoes once filled by the likes of Tim Pope and Julien Temple. Their mastery of the new technology echoes the obsessive, control-freak personalities of Techno musicians and puts them in the best position to understand the layered, programmed sensibilities of electronic music.

In turn these image-makers have absorbed a whole tradition of film-making that pioneered many of these techniques and promulgated the philosophy of "visual music". *Abstract Cinema*, a new Channel

This month, David Eimer stays in to watch a new documentary on Abstract Cinema, and tops off the evening with The Cure live.

Four documentary, looks back to the work of artists like Oskar Fischinger who, as long ago as 1930, was seeking to synchronise his black and white animation with music, as well as fast-forwarding us to the state-of-the-art computer graphics of American Vibeke Sorenson.

It's the early efforts though that established the genre. In the 30s, Fischinger was hired by Walt Disney to work on *Fantasia* — still the best ever animated feature — but like fellow European Viking Eggeling, also featured in *Abstract Cinema*, his own work hasn't been fully appreciated until recently. Just how far ahead of their time these two were is illustrated by their use of fractal zooms, ever-rushing spirals that are the stock image of current ambient videos, and the way their work is almost programmable and capable of being duplicated on a computer.

The advent of computer graphics in the 70s (witness the Annabel Jankel and Rocky Morton video for Elvis Costello's "Accidents Will Happen") eliminated the biggest stumbling block in the way of a true "visual music" by enabling artists to generate an image in real-time, something not possible with animation. Computer graphics also allow the endless repetition necessary when dealing with music that loops back on itself. *Abstract Cinema* spins us through these developments by using rare footage and mixing it with interviews with past and present abstract film-makers. The film offers an intriguing glimpse into a genre that's more relevant now than ever before.

Like *In Bed With Madonna*, *Show*, the latest offering from those perpetual adolescents The Cure, cuts between grainy 'documentary' black and white footage and colour

for the on-stage sequences, although thankfully it spares us any word from the band themselves in-depth public confessions are hardly Robert Smith's style anyway, but the presumably intentional semi-mimicry of the Madonna documentary does highlight the curious position the group maintains within the rock firmament. On the one hand, they're perceived as awkward, make-up wearing, cult English popsters, but they're also capable of selling out a 15,000 seat venue in Detroit for two nights running, as *Show* demonstrates. This dichotomy between image and actual status provides an enviable niche for Smith and his cohorts and they've realised that to remain there, all they have to do is provide their audience with more of the same.

Thus this film, shot during the group's 1992 tour to promote their fifteenth album *Wish*, mixes up new material with old, but the songs don't really sound that different from each other, except there's nothing to equal "Inbetween Days", the song that gets the biggest cheer. That was a near perfect slice of pop, the stuff of *Wish* drifts more into pomp and there's a feeling of the group sliding inexorably into self-parody.

Visually, directors Aubrey Powell and Leroy Bennett rely on 16 cameras strategically placed around the auditorium and then simply cut between them. Once upon a time Cure visuals were innovative and playful (particularly when Tim Pope was working with them) but this is nothing more than a mainstream concert movie. The fans will love it. □

Abstract Cinema is shown on Channel 4 on 5 July. *Show* is released in cinemas nationwide this month.



competitions

Africando



CD competition

Afro-Latin album of the year, no contest. Senegalese voices ride high over Cuban/Puerto Rican salsa in a New York City recording studio. We have five CDs to give away. To win one, give us the literal meaning of 'salsa'.

Jazz Breaks



CD competition

Rare fragments of HipHop, swingbeat, jazz, funk, soul, Latin all sampled and looped into 20 user-friendly breaks 'n' beats by those industrious Coldcut people. We've got five to give away. To win one tell us the names of Coldcut's two members.

Deep Blues



CD/video competition

Fearsome documentary investigation of contemporary, backwoods Mississippi blues, compiled by Dave Stewart, directed by Robert 'No, not that one' Palmer. A CD and video to the first ten to give us their definition of the blues.

Corea/NYJO



CD/tickets competition

Appearing at London's Barbican this month, piano giant Chick Corea (16) and yooof big band NYJO (18). Five tickets for each show (plus five Corea CDs and five NYJO CDs) are on offer if you can tell us what Chick Corea's religion is. **NB:** Closing date for this competition is Monday 12 July.

Send your entries on a postcard (marked with the relevant competition, eg, 'Africando', 'Breaks', 'Blues', 'Barbican') to July Competitions, *The Wire*, 45-46 Poland Street, London W1V 3DF, to reach us by Monday 2 August. Winners of our May and June competitions will be announced in the August issue, so be patient!

soundcheck

WIRE WINNER: music for chameleons

Brian Eno

Nero!

ALL SAINTS AS 15CD

In keeping with its chameleon nature, Ambient has become a catchall euphemism for those quieter moments in music. In Eno's absence from the form he popularised, first as *Discreet Music* and then even more discreetly on his Ambient label, it now describes anything remotely atmospheric (ie you can hear crickets chirruping), electronic or cosmically orientated, regardless of the Wagnerian playback settings (The Orb live). Contemporary usage might make a nonsense of Eno's definition, but so long as the music accords with its environment, then it passes muster as ambient. However, *Nero!*, Eno's first Ambient record proper since 1985's *Thursday Afternoon* (the immensely appealing *The Shutov Assembly* is packed with a little too much incident to really qualify), goes some way to reasserting his definition of Ambient as an oasis of near-silence, a psychic retreat from the tensions of big city noise, a place for repose. The knack of such music is to erect the defences, so to speak, without alerting listeners to outside threat. On *Nero!*, Eno's tracks are a sequence of four notes with an occasional deep bass undertow. As the note sequence pursues its slow circular motions, it kind of enters the listener unnoticed, unlocking notions of silence more impervious to noise than physical silence, always prone to violation, could ever be. Though open-ended in structure — you can enter or leave it as you will — it is paradoxically a most rigorous record, a single, deceptively simple



idea worked through 58 minutes. While it's there it's almost invisible, but once it's over and the noise rushes back in, you are tantalised by its scent-like note sequence into seeking its protection again.

BIRA KOPF

WIRE WINNER: new night moves

Don Grönlück

Nightown

BLUE NOTE CDP 7777 7 90489 CD

Unassuming, thoughtful, a technocrat who prefers an acoustic band and a writer's dedication to penmanship, Grönlück ought to be acclaimed as one of the most interesting talents in the new American mainstream. Records like this one aren't likely to break him out of musician's musician obscurity in a hurry, though. It's too

damn good without kowtowing to star solos and modish icks. The opening "Heart Of Darkness" is some kind of masterpiece, an amazing enigma of a tune that lets the seven-piece band go into clear freedom without once losing any control. The next one, a brilliant recasting of "What Is This Thing Called Love", is scarcely a drop in excellence. And so it goes, through six other surprising, funny, unguessable originals.

He gets the best out of Randy Brecker, Joe Lovano, Steve Turre, Dave Holland and Bill Stewart. But the key presence is probably Mary Ehrlich, whose bass clarinet plays both a vital textural role and throws in some of the best improvisations. He's like Eric Dolphy with Oliver Nelson. And Grönlück himself contributes telling composer's

piano to every track. Did I say some kind of masterpiece? Blue Note won't put out a better record all year.

MIKE FISH

WIRE WINNER: africa now

Baaba Maal

Lam Toro (re-mix)

MANGO CDM 1101 CD

Baaba Maal

Tono

STUDIO 2000 HC

Maal would have to be at the top of virtually any list of important contemporary African musicians, being author of a fine series of acoustic recordings, *Qam Leel* (Rogue 1989), *Booyo* (Mango 1991) and now *Tono*, and in Diandé Leno, leading one of the most thrilling electric bands currently operating, critics comparing it to the James Brown band at its peak are probably not exaggerating.

Last year's *Lam Toro* (Mango) was crass and overworked, but Joe Gallo and Cesar Sogbe's transformatory remix is, by comparison, a triumph — the true successor to Salif Keta's classic electro-traditional *Soro*. The ragamuffin-styled "Hamady Boro" and "Niderloré", for example, sound very much brighter than Simon Booth's rather unfunny and stupid originals. The essential difference is that they have tried to make a dance record rather than a rock record and in doing so have stumbled much closer to the core of this music. That Maal was absent from the sessions and that the producers seem to have little idea of his intentions is a positive plus point, for they approach the music

In Soundcheck:

Eno, Roy Ayers, Gavin Bryars, Bheki Mseleku, P-Funk, Orange Juice, Guru, Haydn, Joe Lovano, Fugazi, Richard Thompson and many more

with a freshness and naivety wholly absent from the original release. They don't really add much to the slower and more acoustic tracks such as "Danilek" though, so it's probably a good job they weren't left loose on *Tono*.

Maal's acoustic music takes on greater depth and clarity with each release. There's a new urgent, bustling edge to *Tono*, its stripped-down guitar, *xalam* (lute) and percussion ensemble, combining with Maal's piercing vocals with misleading simplicity and impassioned directness — tradition and innovation combining perfectly, seamlessly, magnificently. I'd have little hesitation in saying it is his best record yet. Presently available only as an import cassette, it's a shame Mango haven't yet scheduled this for a UK release. This is a pearl which shouldn't be allowed to go unnoticed.

RICHARD SCOTT

WIRE WINNER: *banding together*

Various Artists

Unknown Public Vol 2: Common Ground

UPC02 CD

Besides being a perfectly listenable collection of non-mainstream approaches to music, *Unknown Public* is an intervention and a challenge and an engagement and an argument, or the beginnings of one — but it's also a wager, with itself, against the ugly possibility that no one cares any more, about quality, ideas, resistance or exploration about music as something real for the future, about music as something more than one item among many on a leisure-industry balance sheet.

Because all this is so, it's not hard

In Outline:

Rob Young ODs on ECM; Ian Penamr hears the agony and the ecstasy in new tango

Further consumer info: labels not named in this column should be obtainable at good specialist stores — or through such sterling distributors as New Note, Harmonia Mundi, Cadillac, Impetus, These ...

Studio: Sterns, 116 Whitfield Street, London W1P 5RW

Unknown Public: Dept W, Freepost (RG 2558), PO Box 354, Reading RG2 7BR

In Brief:

Tony Herrington climbs a mountain of new jazz; Kodwo Eshun moves laterally through the dance underground

to find faults: the various music pieces that go to make up this audio-magazine do not yet belong in perfected art-stones, honey-buffed with age for your appreciation. Some of them, in fact, may never belong anywhere. Others, taken one at a time, perhaps feel tentative, or unfocused, or even hand-me-down.

Buxton Orr's "Refrains VI", for example, doesn't quite escape the glutinous apologetics of quasi-orchestral synth-arrangements. Andrew Poppy's Brit-minimalism lacks the drone-process rigour and drive of its American founders. Dave Heath writes a fiercely centrist manifesto for the looseleaf part of the audio-magazine ("any music without discernible rhythm or a relationship to the tonic is emotionless and empty") well and good, but if you read it first it certainly draws the sting of his spiky piano.

On the other hand, sometime Jazz Warrior Fayyaz Virji's almost motorless "Sandra Raag" transcends the second-handism of its genesis (he heard an Indian flute player, loved it, wanted to do the same with trombone). BBC Radiophonic Workshopper Elizabeth Parker's "A Passing Whale", a headphone-phantasm of veils and drifting ones, is worth more than the overvised cuteness of its subject. The fragment of Will Menter's "Can Y Graig"/"Slate Voices" attests to the original's attractive percussive sonority.

And so on. The theme, *Common Ground*, is examined by indirection and intuitive linkage — much the best way. The issue's prospectus talks about a Venn diagram with "all music types and intersecting

groups with creative music in the middle", and "multi-dimensional axes crisscrossing through the centre". Fighting talk for any geometer, as I'm sure you'll agree. "Multi-dimensional" is common sense — but the notion that every piece of music has presence in every dimension isn't. Which makes it less than axiomatic that there's a centre at all — or that creativity is at it if there is one!

But the ways we want to take issue with its conceptual-aesthetic geometry will have to wait, sadly. The point is, it's a forceful venture — open and aggressive enough to will itself the centre for a while. Even if you hate every item — and the overall design is cunning and precocious and niggling enough to put you a little in mind to — they still win their wager with themselves about whether people still care. No masterpiece, but an effective provocation — they're kick-starting the debate, by providing platform and starter topics for ten. Give it a try — if you really think you can do better, it's up to you to deliver.

MARK SINKER

soundcheck

Roy Ayers

A Shining Symbol
POLYDOR 519 378 2CD

Everywhere I've stopped looking, Roy Ayers is pretty much hegemonic. In the sections of clubland which insist on calling themselves "jazzy", he's a sentimental con. Tracks such as "Love Will Bring Us Back Together" and "Everybody Loves The Sunshine", with their overdubs and



boundaries of vibes and blissful harmonics, their stretched and breezy hooks, are always called classics. Which is to say they are all souled out, run dry by their mixture of smug possessiveness and "it's just good music" protective stupidity that we English reserve for our adopted Blacks who they, the Americans, don't appreciate anymore. If Ayers's music seems to hold no creases or partial shadows any more, as compared to say Eddie Henderson or Bernie Maupin, it's because it comes to us through that inflated antique economy called rare groove which has placed his most glimmering and filigreed tracks — such as "We Live In Brooklyn Baby," "Shining Symbol" and "Time And Space" (which features the seamless caress of Dee Dee Bridgewater) — beyond the reach of all but a few Polydor's excellent double album compilation allows us all to hear these moments of genuine over-reach, thus shattering the previous sense we have of this producer/arranger. If we squint through the opening allowed by such amazing tracks as "Evolution" then the soft Afrocentricity of "2000 Black" and "Red, Black And Green" starts to look less like whitebread friendliness and more an ambitious urge to redraw the language of street metaphysics. Along with Lesian Smith's Cosmic Echoes and, to a lesser extent, Connor's Starship Orchestra, the Roy Ayers Ubiquity of the 70s can be seen as an art ensemble whose mission was to develop a language which could flip between the cosmos and the ghetto without either getting stigmatized, to expand the terms of black romanticism: a project whose terms can be seen in both Ice Cube and PM Diddy. The authenticity invested in each is Roy Ayers's gift.

The Blue Humans (feat. Rudolph Grey)

Clear To Higher Time
NEW ALLIANCE NAB 077C0

Clear To Higher Time reopens the debate as to the relevance of Free music in 1993. Jaded ears and new age cynics are colluding to block the routes opened by such



60s recordings as *Ascension*, *Free Jazz* and *Machine Gun* with a "heard it all before" shrug of the shoulders. But surely concluding that Free music has already reached its peak excludes fresh skills and new contexts and ignores the advent of electrical instruments and amplification.

Having worked with and learned from Rashied Ali, Beaver Harris, Charles Taylor, Arthur Doyle, etc., The Blue Hums' taste for the incendiary has already left a scorched improvisational trail with recordings like *Mask Of Light*. But this CD isn't content to replay ESP's finest thrills. Instead, it forms the missing link between *Last Exit* and the Vu's *White Light/White Heat*. Guitarist Rudolph Grey formed this New York based band after jettisoning ambitions to be a painter, and the spirit of Jackson Pollock stalks the music's hi-end data chatter, as spewed out by Grey and fellow guitarist Alan Licht on "Finally".

The third member of the trio, drummer Tom Surgall, suffers from having no volume control on his kit and a guitarist (Thurston Moore) at the mixing desk, but his cumulative intensity resembles Coltrane's other polyrhythmic metronome, Elvin Jones. On the title track, his expansive cymbal washes swell up to ignite the self-immolating guitars channel left and right.

This is an explosive release, which will hopefully reset the agenda for Free music in the 90s.

K. MARTIN

Braaxtaal
Braaxtaal
KONTRANS 932 CD

Luc Houtkamp
The Rule of Thumb
X-00 CD D3 CD

Braaktal are a Dutch trio which has vocalist Jaap Blonk as its focal point. Blonk doesn't actually sing, instead, he uses his voice in a whole range of virtuosic, semi-theatrical contrivances, from entirely abstract guttural grunts and roars on "Bla-bling On No Nonsense" through a species of sound poetry on "Hommage a A.A." (after Antonin Artaud), to whispered, spoken, chanted or

shouted words in several languages, often within the same song. And he does actually sing, sort of, in "Atlatloltika", albeit as a total pastiche. Also the mode of "Deutsche Lyrik". The inordinately long "Spraakwater" is a kind of compendium of all these techniques.

He is accompanied on these exploits by Rob Daenen on synthesizer and Theo Bodelwes on drums and percussion, laying down backing textures which vary from the spacious and ethereal to the urgently rhythmic, via large swishes of industrial type noise production. All compositions/improvisations are by the band, and like many of the products of the latter extremes of the Dutch experimental scene, will probably be more effective live. On disc, the novelty wears quite fast, and I don't think I would feel the urge to pull it off the shelf very often.

Not too many records, though, can boast a song on the subject of constipation, and in English, too. The manic "All Day Belly Rumble" comes complete with a series of disgusting voicing noises of various descriptions, and should be just the thing to liven up dinner parties across the nation.

Luc Houtkamp comes out of another stream — or streams — of Dutch experiment, and a rather more sober one. Two of his collaborators on this disc are American, and two Dutch, and their music brings together improvisation and electronic music, partly in an attempt to illustrate that the two "are not as distant as generally assumed"

*1021 features Hourikamp's tenor saxophone altered by computer-controlled electronics, a restless, exploratory dialogue with Richard Teitelbaum's keyboard and computer. That interface is also at the heart of "The Rule Of Thumb", an experiment in electronic transposition in which the saxophonist's version for alto and interactive computer programme is followed by guitarist Jacques Palnicok's very different takes on the piece.

He experiments again with saxophone and computer in "Vogeltrek", and tape on the earlier "Odd & Even", co-composed with

Toby Van Campen. All are fascinating, and suggest that the possibilities of this kind of interaction, which is still in its infancy, are enormous. The disc is rounded out, though, by "71B", an old-fashioned freely improvised blow between Houtkamp and trombonist George Lewis. Unplugged from their respective computers, they prove that there is plenty of mileage still left in the old technology.

KENNY NATHESON

Brodsky Quartet

Death And The Maiden/Black Angels

TELARC 9031-76260 CD

This is a brave coupling from the Brodsky Quartet, given that many listeners drawn to Schubert may be dissuaded from dipping into their pockets by the presence of the Crumb, and, to a lesser extent, vice versa. It's a combination they have used in concert, and there are tenuous links, including Crumb's use of a quote from the Schubert, but the sound-worlds the two pieces inhabit are chalk and cheese.

Schubert's *Death And The Maiden* (String Quartet in D Minor, D810) is one of the great landmarks of the string quartet repertoire. The Brodsky's reading does not usurp my own favourite, that of the Lindsay Quartet, but it is cut from the same cloth in many ways. They take a bold, dramatic view of the music, stressing the dark tension and power of the opening movement, qualifies which its moments of repose only emphasize, and play the closing phase with the great vitality it requires; if it is a dance of death, then it is an uncommonly lively one.

The quotation which George Crumb works into the fabric of his *Black Angels* — *Thirteen Images From The Dark Land* comes from the second movement, a set of six variations, and appears in the middle of the American work. Crumb wrote *Black Angels* in 1970, at the height of the Vietnam War, and intends the spiritual journey described in its three sections (in 13 parts) to mirror the confusion and pain of that conflict. It begins scarily with the

violent horror-movie slashes of the first "Threnody" (they were actually used in *The Exorcist* soundtrack), with the strings distorted by electronic means. Unconventional techniques, surreally displaced voices and additional instruments are also used throughout, and the music moves from the disturbing chaos of the "Departure" section to the relative leavering of "Absence", and the uneasy stasis of "Return".

Harsh and uncompromising, it is one of Crumb's best works. This is the second recent recording, and the Brodsky's choose uniformly slower tempos throughout than the Kronos Quartet did on *Black Angels* (Elektra Nonesuch 7559-79242). The Americans are more severe and more disturbing in their interpretation, but the two versions are so distinct that it is well worth considering, even if you already have the earlier one, and like Crumb enough to make the investment. For me, though, they don't quite make first choice in either work.

KENNY NATHESON

Gavin Bryars

Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet
POINT 438 823 CD

The anonymous Cockney singer of "Jesus' Blood" made his debut, courtesy of Gavin Bryars, on Brian Eno's Obscure label in 1975. Bryars had been helping with a documentary about down-and-outs at Waterloo, and acquired the tape of the old tramp's moving hymn "Jesus' blood never failed me yet/Jesus' blood never failed me yet/There's one thing I know/For he loves me so".

At Leicester Poly, where he was teaching, Bryars made a loop. What happened next surprised him: "I left the door of the recording studio open. When I came back I found the normally lively room unnaturally subdued. People were moving about much more slowly than usual, and a few were sitting alone, quietly weeping" — intimating the power of the unaccompanied singing.

It is poignant for sure. The composer makes some judicious comments about why, though I wouldn't agree there is irony between what the old man is

singing and his circumstances — who are we to say that Jesus' blood failed him? The new recording is three times longer than the original Tom Waits, ubiquitous these days, joins in for the final sections. Though I'm a fan (a dangerous thing to confess in these pages) Waits's singing sits oddly with the old man's unaffected expression of faith. The first 25-minute section with string quartet and eventually full ensemble corresponds closely to the original, and maybe that was long enough. It is beautifully and soberly orchestrated.

You might think of the singing as a musical "found object" analogous to Marcel Duchamp's urine. Its odd power remains hard to explain. Repeated unchanged, it underpins what is, despite reservations about length, a hypnotic work. The tramp died before he could listen to the first recording, and the music, as the composer says, is a "restrained testament to his spirit and optimism".

ANDY HAMILTON

Joey Calderazzo

The Traveler

BLUE NOTE 7809022 CD

Bhaki Mseleku

Meditations

SAHADI MUSIC SA CD 001 CD

Stephen Scott

Amnah's Dream

VERVE 314 517 996-2 CD

Two highly enjoyable piano albums, one could-do-better. By far the most irresistible is the Bhaki Mseleku, recorded (very commendably) at last year's Bath Festival. Exploring the solo territory worked so successfully by fellow South African Abdullah Ibrahim, and African-influenced American Randy Weston, Mseleku creates startlingly evocative and hypnotic music from the most simple of two- or three-chord structures. Within his delicate, panoramic music it is possible to hear church music, Eastern chants, Western classicism, Latin tangos and jazz improvisation, but its root, its pulse remains insistently and unmistakably African, especially in his use of folk themes, rhythms and resolutions. Over the course of

almost 46 minutes the intensity barely falters (at one point Mseleku even plays piano and tenor saxophone simultaneously), the overall effect being that of creative accretion, of bearing witness to a highly personal musical journey.

American Stephen Scott's music is some distance from such profundity, but affecting nonetheless. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of *Amnah's Dream*, a work of considerable confidence, intelligence and maturity, is that Scott is just 23. This is disconcerting, even by New York *wunderkind* standards. His compositions, which range from blues and stride stomps to swinging bop, have a pleasingly playful edge. His playing is clean and straightforward, but its freshness and depth of ideas never fail to ignite. And on four of the ten tracks, he augments a rhythm section of Ron Carter and Elvin Jones (a tribute in itself) with horn section arrangements that yield lush textures and Ellingtonian colour. It is a hugely impressive and musically second CD.

Fellow American Joey Calderazzo, who is on his third for Blue Note as leader, suffers by comparison. Swapping his previous big-name sax star groups (with Branford Marsalis and Michael Brecker) for two trio settings, the change seems to do him no good. Not only does the majority of the CD consist of barely warmed-up standards — "Yesterdays", "Blue in Green", "What Is This Thing Called Love?" — but they expose him as a player too often bereft of ideas. Worse of all, almost every tune, even the ballads, is unforgivingly bulldozed into a breathless, breakneck post-bop that leaves little room for originality or communication. The words "flat" and "one-dimensional" spring to mind.

PHILIP WATSON

Les Freres Coulibaly

Anka Dia

AUVIDIS ETHNIC B 6775 CD

Adama Dramé

Great Masters Of Percussion

AUVIDIS ETHNIC B 6126 CD

Koko Du Burkina Faso
Balafora And African Drums Vol 2
PLAYASOUND PS 65101 CD

Farafina
Farafina
REAL WORLD RWCD 35 CD/PC

The frighteningly gifted multi-instrumentalist Coulibaly brothers from Burkina Faso are the tightest African acoustic group I have heard. Their brilliantly combined collective virtuosity on drums and balafon sounds simultaneously like a single person and a ten piece group (actually there's three of them). Turning song into drum into speech they manipulate some of the most complex rhythmic arrangements with a clarity and singleness of direction that is astonishing. More than simply expressing the tradition which bears them (as so many African artists do) they have internalised it fully, making it their own voice. Screw the old distinctions, measure it against who you like, this is contemporary music of the highest possible calibre.

Djembe-master Adama Dramé's re-released 1987 solo hand-drum recording demands similar accolades. Maybe critics jump to use words like "breath-taking" and "unbelievable" too easily, but it is difficult to find other words to describe music-making at this dizzying level. Breath-taking. Unbelievable.

The Koko CD is more lumpenly traditional in approach, the rhythms being presented in their most basic hypnagogically repetitious forms, a little short on originality, detail and personality. Like 1990's rock or pop, the tradition tends to serve less as a point of departure than as an end in itself.

Farafina make more of an attempt to innovate but they are rather a ramshackle bunch. Like certain other Real World/WOMAD groups they often have the appearance of having fallen on their feet rather than being particularly good at what they do. They can put on a good show but this release, featuring guest drummer Billy Cobham, is nothing special.

RICHARD SCOTT

Dub Syndicate
Live at The TB&C
DN-B CD19 CD

Didja get any On-U? U bet I did! Excellent recording captures the pounding On-U Sound system in living colour. Adrian Sherwood with his giant electronic spoon in the cauldron and mixologist cap on, stirring up an enervating in-concert rub-a-dub dub. Style Scott lays down his fal-safale thwack, Junior Moses goes down on bass and Skip McDonald scratches and squeals on lead guitar. Vocal trio Akabu sings "Stompede" — an outright song in amid the mix-mastery — and they wall back up on "Stoned Immaculate" and "Secret Laboratory", both of which feature samples of Lee "Scratch" Perry's recorded vox (Note: the nine tracks listed don't correspond exactly to the order of the disc's ten tracks.) Bim Sherman's sweet dulcet tones grace the set as well, his "Too Hot To Handle" rests on an extremely mean groove and hydrochloric keyboard part. Strong as this is, as with the live African Head Charge record from a few years back, I'd be lying not to insist that you own the studio Dub Syndicate catalogue first.

JOHN CORBETT

The Fugs
First Album, with Sizzling Additional Tracks From the Early Fugs
ACE CDWIND 119

Whoa there, for folk's sake stop these Fugs. With a film of Ed Sanders' memoirs *New York City — Tales Of Beatnik Glory* hovering menacingly just beneath the horizon (Willem Dafoe is expected to star), and now this, the first in a series of resues, prompt action will have to be taken if these dubious characters are not to have a major resurgence.

Founded by beat luminaries Ed Sanders and Tuli Kupferberg in late 1964, and named after the fornicatory euphemism from Norman Mailer's *The Naked And The Dead* — it's a good job they couldn't get *Pompage* in the 1960s, otherwise they would have been called *The Nafis* — The Fugs just beat *The Velvet Underground* for the mantle of first great

underground band. Their music has not endured in the way Tucker, Morrison & co's did, and was never meant to. A jug-band jumble of "euphistic mud-moans and testosterone added ere crooning", it was a product of the moment to the extent that listening to it now is actually painful.

Not because they couldn't play (when has that ever mattered?) or weren't perfectly astute in their realisation that "there was oodles of freedom guaranteed by the United States" constitution that was not being used", but because the major use to which they chose to put that bonus freedom was frat-boy sexism of the most dull and depressing sort. "Boobs A Lot" for example would embarrass WASP and The Fugs' "Supergirl" is expected to "cook like a demon" as well as chain herself to their libido. The fact that feminism had not yet formally been invented and The Beatles' "Ticket To Ride" was number one is no excuse.

Fans and those who were there first time around and understand what it was really all about will be pleased to know that as well as The Fugs' first album *The Village Fugs — Ballads Of Contemporary Protest, Points Of View And General Dissatisfaction*, this CD features eight minutes of Kupferberg's song ideas with commentary by Sanders and unreleased material from the band's first studio sessions including their anthemic debut in collective recorded sound "We're The Fugs" and the self-explanatory but amusing "In The Middle Of Their First Recording Session The Fugs Sign The Worst Contract Since Leadbelly's".

Three decades later, this sense of self-awareness, of having fun with their own identity, is the most liberating thing about them. The three numbers from their "Night Of Napalm" — an anti-war rhapsody at the Bridge Theatre — come nearest to convincing the sceptical that there might have been some joy in The Fugs. The last, "Spaghetti Death", culminates in tubfuls of spaghetti being thrown into the audience while the band chant "No Redemption", Sanders claiming to have scored a direct hit on a "spiritly dressed" Andy Warhol, "to give him a symbolic understanding

of what American planes were doing in South East Asia".
BEN THOMPSON

Funkadelic
Tales Of Kild Funkadelic
WESTBOND CDSEW 054

George Clinton et al
The Family Series Part 3: P Is The Funk
ESSENTIAL ESSCD 190

Various Artists
Classic P-Funk (Definitive P-Funk Masterscuts Volume 1)
MASTERCUTS CUTSCD 12

Bernie Worrell
Blacktronic Science
GRAMAVISION R279474 CD

It's surprising to learn that Funkadelic's *Tales* dates from 1976, because it sounds like a much earlier production, play it alongside 78's *One Nation Under A Groove*, and it's like a whole other era. It has harder edges, it has a tighter (less spacey-spongy) rump-ripple texture, and the title track is a mammoth instrumental jam which sounds like nothing so much as ELP spoken with P-funk dust. For some reason, it isn't a gigantic pain in the ass, but it is very, very much of its time. Everything else here is on the one, and far from being a time warp, you can hear pointers and paradigms aplenty a couple of future eras unfolding inside 'ya' ears.

As TWA observed in *The Wire* 1D9 (reviewing the Family Series Vols 1 & 2) all this Clinton re-issue activity is a mixed blessing as well as a mixed bag, but when all's said and done, taken together they make up an essential history lesson, and not just for rare groove train-spotters. While many critics tend to chart things like Clinton's history in purely musicological terms, the whole question of mode of address — of who is speaking to who and how and why — is often overlooked. Far from being a deeply idiosyncratic throwback showbiz CD, Clinton's personae plays and popstar plays are a way of constantly snagging the "we" of popular song and throwing it into question between the "we" and

the "you" of "We came to funk you?" Clinton p-constructs a whole world of difference.

Various inflections of that other-worldly language — and some of its inhabitants — can be gleaned and glimpsed on *P Is The Funk*. This is an altogether tougher and more essential collection than the previous two, with more straight hard funk. The Brides Of Funkenstein's "Love Is Something" is an atypical gorgeous ballad (with interesting comments from Clinton about his disincarnation to "pimp that love thing"); "Clone Commando" is a flex-disc manifesto; and Parliament's "Every Booty (Get On Down)" could be used as an aural textbook diagram to show how Bootsy's bass spaced out Clinton's vision. Epochal, if a bass ever was such a thing.

If you want to get started — as "Every Booty's" chorus puts it — picking up on the myriad satellites sent out by Clinton over the years, then *Classic P-Funk* is a good place to start. It mixes stuff which will be well known and worn by devotees, with more tangential things. There are a couple of obscure jewels — an early Red Hot Chili Peppers' 12" jam with Uncle Clinton.

("Hollywood" a partial rewrite of the Meters' "Africa") and nine minutes of "Dog Talk" by the pseudonymous "K-9 Corp".

Blacktronic Science has all the outward signs of being the sort of plunkatory platter that's bound straight for the bargain bins. The sort of solo album an artist's PR calls "long awaited," but which isn't, by an impeccably credentialed sideman who should have stayed that way. Worse, it's one of those Bill Laswell-networked bashes. Oh no, you inwardly sigh: it'll be one more sterile Laswell jam that unaccountably reduces all my favourite people to muso mediocrity.

But if you can also get past *Blacktronic Science's* dreadful and strangely 70s cover, this turns out to be the exception which proves all the preceding rules. Not only does it showcase Worrell to excellent effect(s), but by using George Clinton and Bootsy Collins (among others) as Worrell's sidemen — thus taking the spotlight pressure off them — it brings out

Playasound: Sterns, 116 Whitfield Street, London W1P 5RW

Owl: 15 Place Saint-Martin, 1400 Caen, France

FFIP: through Impetus

the best in these two on/off mavericks. The end result is the best thing any of this bunch has done for spacey acons. That goes for Laswell's production job, too. Instead of trying to explicitly update these funksters into a hard-hop 90s sheen, he just lets them do their rubbery resonant thang, with a few unobtrusive Laswell loops and layers thrown in. If you play it skipping the two jazz tracks ("Blood Secrets" and "X-Factor", both consisting of a trio of Worrell, Maceo Parker and Tony Williams) you have a new Funkadelic album in all but name (Gary "Mudbone" Cooper, Fred Wesley and Parker are also lurking in the mix).

Not that you should ignore the jazz tracks, which are way above muso doodle — lush, idiosyncratic grooves, with Williams' languorously tough work of especial note. All in all, there should be few p-unters out there who can't find their kind of booty in here.

IAN PENMAN

Jimmy Guffie/Paul Bley/Steve Swallow

Fly Away Little Bird
DWL 068 380662 CD

Gentle, oblique, lyrical, sometimes furtive, occasionally infuriating, strong, intense, intimate, intuitive [that's enough adjectives — Ed.] Just some of the qualities that make up the latest

Guffie/Bley/Swallow album. After a 25-year sabbatical, they've finally got together again in probably the most fruitful partnership of their careers. The two recent live volumes of *The Life Of A Trio*, also on Owl, complement the ECM reissue of two 1960's albums.

"Far out is one thing, but I'm more interested in, hmmm, expanding," said Guffie in a memorable *Wired* interview (issue 61). *Fly Away* retreats from abstraction, memorably deconstructing five standards including "All The Things You Are", "Lover Man" and "Goodbye", the effect is totally refreshing. Melody and not just chords are integral, and in fact there's a productive tension within Guffie's creative approach, where "the line creates its own harmony." The result is a

unique alliance of lyricism and freedom.

Nowadays Steve Swallow prefers electric bass, which makes his solo tracks, appropriately "Fits" and "Stars", very guitar-like. Guffie complements his fluffy-toned clarinet with soprano, and, on "Bats In The Belly", some George Crumb-like vocising in Italian. Bley occasionally delves inside the piano. The programme reflects their CMN tour last autumn. At the Queen Elizabeth Hall, with the music at its gentlest, the suspense was over whether Guffie would tread on the glasses which he had carefully placed on the floor by his instrument-stand. (He didn't, but it was close.) That performance was a revelation, and *Fly Away* is the closest to it on record. It's all melody.

ANDY HAMILTON

Globe Unity Orchestra

20th Anniversary
FFP 45 CD

King Ubu Orchestra

Binauralty
FFP 49 CD

A glance at *Resonance*, the magazine of the London Musicians Collective, will show that the old composition-improvisation controversy is still very much alive. The arguments are skewed here in Britain because the documented examples of composing for improvisers are so poor, lending weight to Derek Bailey's anti-composer pursuit. If we had Alexander Von Schlippenbach and his Globe Unity Orchestra (or composers Alex Maguire and Simon Fell and Martin Archer got the funding they deserve), the whole argument might take on a different colour.

Von Schlippenbach does not impose some half-baked notion of composer-conductor "genius" on his cohorts by writing twaddly music-college "themes", but clarifies the forces at his disposal so that the whole breathes and individuals shine. Recorded in 1986 in Berlin, *20th Anniversary* is a magnificent recording of a magnificent 12-piece ensemble. Paul Lovens (drums) and Alan Silva (bass) provide pace and stimulus.

THE FUGS FIRST ALBUM

WITH ADDITIONAL TRACKS FROM THE EARLY FUGS



Classic P-Funk

NEW RELEASE



from the bottom up, aided by the fat, greasy power of three trombones (George Lewis, Günter Christmann and Albert Mangelsdorff — phew!) and Bob Stewart's beautiful tuba. Everyone involved understands the mystery and majesty Schlippenbach is aiming for, and everyone sounds great (Toshiko Kondo and Kenny Wheeler play trumpets, Gerd Dudek, Evan Parker and Ernst-Ludwig Petrowsky saxophones) Schlippenbach's trenchant comping is just what these heavyweight voices require. Well recorded by Jost Gebers, too.

The ten-piece King Ubu Orchestra play pure improvisation, stringy and ebullient and electrically sensitive. It is tense with urgent collective critique and commentary. When players are silent it's as if they have squeezed their expression beyond hearing. There is a free jazz trenchancy about Globe Unity that means you can talk about a rhythm section, here every sound merits its own vector. The musicians are Wolfgang Fuchs, Peter Van Bergen, Luc Houtkamp (reeds), Günter Christmann, Radu Malfatti, Melynn Poore (brass), Phil Wachsmann (violin), Torsten Müller (bass), Paul Lytton (drums), Georg Katzer (computer). There is always something extraordinary to listen to and it's breathtakingly well played, creating a music brusing in the directness of its intent. A locus of truth in a world of hype and manipulation.

While the arguments over improvisation versus composition continue, the real scandal is the low esteem in which improvisation — whether "directed" or "pure" — is held by those who control the purse-strings.

BEN WATSON

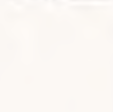
Vic Godard

The End Of The Surrey People
POSTCARD DUBH934CD

Orange Juice

The Heather's On Fire
POSTCARD DUBH932CD

Television release a new album, the Buzzcocks go on tour, and even Ultravox have been persuaded there's a new market for their



brand of polished Euro-gloom
Welcome to 1980

Having spent the 80s watching the undignified exhumation of 70s rock dinosaurs reforming for one last money-milking exercise, it's now the turn of the punks and their little brothers — the ones who were supposed to hate all that kind of stuff — to have another crack.

But if there was one thing that characterised punk and its aftermath it was the indie label: so now we get labels reforming too. Postcard had a couple of brilliant years a decade ago — Aztec Camera at their initial best, Josef K, The Bluebelts and, of course, Orange Juice.

The tracks on *The Heather's On Fire* sound incredibly crude now: barely-tuned guitars, primitive echoey recording, drums that speed up and Edwin Collins truly cannot sing. The band got much slicker in their post-Postcard recordings but, of course, this is the stuff that matters. Great tunes, great pop hits that never were.

Vic Godard might seem a curious addition to the Postcard canon. Last time I saw him he was re-inventing himself as a supper-club crooner — curious how many of the blank generation came to fancy themselves as latterday Mel Tormes. In the late 70s, though, his group The Subway Sect were managed by Bernie Rhodes, part of the London punk establishment, and on the White Riot tour Godard was armed to strip the Americans out of rock, though to my ears he always seemed to have more in common with the likes of Television and Patti Smith than with any English bands.

The Subway Sect's currency was strong melodies and introspective lyrics and they were a strong influence on Collins and Postcard's Alan Home. Nothing much has changed. Godard touches musical bases with Rockability and Northern Soul ("Won't Turn Back"). Collins produces, ex-Pistol Paul Cook thrashes the drums. Often though, (listen to "Talent To Follow"), this sounds very like the Velvet Underground. And they've reformed too.

JOHN RENNIE

Christine Groult

L'Heure Alors S'indigne
METAPHINE MKCD006 CD

Lionel Marchette

Mue
METAPHINE MKCD007 CD

Mini-CDs measuring eight centimetres across, housed in handy cardboard sleeves (no cursed jewel-box), part of the *Collection Cinéma pour l'oreille*. This is *musique concrète*, a form developed in Paris in the late-40s: electronic music realised on tape that bypasses ethno-plunder soundtrack fraudulence, bibbly-bubbly academia and Tangenne Dream in one fell swoop.

Christine Groult's disc is a homage to Luigi Nono, the pioneer of sensitive scrape who died in 1989. Groult's music is similarly affecting and magical, though more muscular, a collage made of fuzzes and beyond-focus sonorities. Without a discernible beat, Groult manages to create a distinctive flow: her sounds grab the attention yet find ways of evolving, a flux with a purpose. An 18 minute delight.

Lionel Marchette's *Mue* is divided into seven tracks, but works as a single piece too. It's more jumpy and disruptive, but has a similar sense of concentration, achieving transmutation of the materials rather than the facile piling-up of emotive tokens. In synth-land Hervé Bocquin's "voix de tête" — a stuttered fassetto — paces well-differentiated bumps and purgles. Again, the musical flow is evident, despite the sheer unlikelihood of the constituent noises. Enamoured of the incomprehension that greets innovation, experimental electronics tends to a continual deferral of meaning: this pops and snaps like good bebop. Scrumptious.

For those committed to non-wave and brevity (those who realise that the great tragedy of wry's demise is the loss of the seven-inch single), this series gets both music and format right.

BEN WATSON

Guru

Jazzmatazz Volume 1
CHRYSALIS CTCD 34

Metaphine: 13 Rue de la Brague,
38600 Fontaine, France

Sparrow: PO Box 116, 1601
Fredrikstad, Norway

Postcard: through Revolver/APT

ECM: through New Note

Bill Adler's sleeve notes to this "experimental fusion of HipHop and live jazz" wisely point out that the older music has been adding "flavor and elegance" to the younger ever since its Bronx birth. Jazz-rap then was always a truism, but it was Gang Starr and a passing Marsalis who gave that truism breath and a natty suit (via "Jazz Thing" on the *Mo' Better Blues* soundtrack). Gang Starr's Guru then, aka Keith Elam, was always the man for this job, but I can't help feeling this would have been a better record if he had been called away on jury service and someone from A Tribe Called Quest had done it instead.

It's not Guru's voice, rich and suave as it is, that's the problem. It's the fact that he's got nothing to say. Since the great early adventure of "Who's Gonna Take The Weight?" Gang Starr have consistently failed to be as good as they should have been. Guru's raps just don't hold your (well, my) attention and that's a particular shame here, with all these fine instruments and singing voices waiting to be interacted with. The beats are a problem too: meant to keep the whole project "jeep ready", actually they just clutter it up. The two most effective pieces are the opening and interval minutes, wherein Keith announces his purpose and sends respect to his parents accompanied only by a trumpet and a vibraphone.

There's no arguing with the celebrity guest list though. Roy Ayers, Donald Byrd, Ndeia Davenport and Branford Marsalis are here for starters (all this and DC Lee and Gary Barnard too!) but right from the classical smoking blowing pose on the sleeve, the relentless "jazzness" of it all is just a bit tired. Keith's "special shout outs" on the inner sleeve — to Lonnue Loston Smith ("You just have this cosmic vibe, man"), to Ronny Jordan ("You're shit is dope... You're on the cutting edge bro! (sic)" (if you had to find Ronny Jordan quickly, would the cutting edge really be the first place you'd look?) — would not look out of place on the forthcoming Nigel Kennedy jazz album. And in the end it's a shame that with so much great work being done at the

moment on the frontier between HipHop and jazz — Digable Planets' live show for example made the whole bebop chat thing look effortless — this highest profile skirmish should be so resolutely uninteresting.

BEN THOMPSON

Joseph Haydn

The Seven Last Words
PHILIPS 434.994 CD

The so-called Seven Last Words actually were sentences — eg "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" — spoken by Jesus during his crucifixion. Several times they have been taken from the four gospels to form a text for passion music, most memorably by Schutz (c1645), but Haydn's approach was strictly instrumental. Indeed this is the rare case of a work that is unique, not properly comparable with anything else, for he wrote (commissioned by Cadiz Cathedral) seven orchestral meditations on the "words". The idea of that many slow movements in succession may appear excessive even if followed, as here, by a representation of an earthquake, and Haydn did later say how difficult it had been to sustain interest over the distance (his music lasts for 54 minutes). But he more than succeeded, coming to look on this, rightly, as one of his finest achievements.

His ensemble is flute, two each of oboes, bassoons, trumpets, four french horns, timpani and strings — in other words the same as for the "Paris" Symphonies that he was composing at about this time (1785-6). Though he brings his instrumental forces into play gradually, each of these *adagios* is more fully developed than the slow movements of almost any of his symphonies, with orchestral textures that are sometimes quite elaborate and always imaginative. Such a work could never enjoy the popularity of *The Seasons* or *The Creation* but has long been greatly admired by connoisseurs. It is for them that this new performance, recorded in 1991, was surely intended. Scarcely is it news that the Berlin Philharmonic plays superbly, but Riccardo Muti does get an acutely expressive response

from them, its depth (in both sense and richness magnificently caught by the Philips engineers (Volker Straus et al))

MAX HARRISON

Sergey Kuryokhin

Sparrow Oratorium
SPARROW INTERNATIONAL SPI 101 CD

An enigma and some of his variations. A decade after his striking debut with *The Ways Of Freedom*, last year's *Some Combinations Of Fingers And Passion* presented Kuryokhin as a relatively "straight" solo pianist. Together with his appearance at the Bath Festival the year before, it readjusted expectations made on the basis of Pop Mechanics' weird "Marian" collage *Sparrow Oratorium* shifts them still further.

It's a curious piece, set for relatively orthodox jazz groups but using vocal texts in Kuryokhin's "sparrow language". Messiaen transcribed the duncock's shy call and the house sparrow's licks and tweets in *River Des Oiseaux*, but Kuryokhin seems to have attempted something more like a very birdsong. The opening section is an awkward cross of Michael Oldfield and American Minimalism, with a female voice chanting phonemic clusters. Later sections (and the piece seems to be structured on a four seasons principle) contain a much higher improvisational component with booty sa solos and greater variety in the rhythm section.

Typically, Kuryokhin has laden the music with allusions and almost subliminal references: classical forms (including a *duty* — or should that be *duty* — "Nye-d" reference to Vivaldi), rock (including The Beatles, and The Doors at their epic and equally allusive *Soft Parade* period), folk modes and wholly abstract passages. What it adds up to is anyone's guess, but it's certainly Kuryokhin's most accessible music to date.

BRIAN HORTON

Sarah Leonard & Christopher Bowers-Broadbent

Gorecki/Satie/Milhaud/Bryars
ECM NEW SERIES 1495 437 956 CD

Heiner Goebbels

SHADOW/Landscape With Argonauts

ECM NEW SERIES 1480 513 372 CD

Sacred and profane, heaven and hell, stargaze and streetlight: an old polarity will never let you down. The organ has been the authentic voice of European Christianity for centuries, yet is capable of producing a truly infernal din (in a non-pejorative sense) which might threaten the very base of metaphysical belief. If man invents an instrument to produce all that volume, what room is there for God? In Christopher Bowers-Broadbent and Sarah Leonard's anthology, the organ does indeed seem to represent the base and human, while Leonard's pristine voice, barely of this world, takes on the aspect of heaven. Writing of Gorecki's "O Domine Nostra", Wilfred Mellers's sleeve-note talks of the feeling of "serene insecurity" induced by the composer's music, if we agree with Mellers, the voice offers serenity, only to be undercut by the threatening insecurity rumbling deep in the organ. As with so much of Gorecki's work, the refusal to make the music develop seems to express a resignation that is at least passive, perhaps pessimistic. Music for our time, certainly.

On aural evidence, Gavin Bryars's "The Black River" seems to share the same belief-system, but the text here is Jules Verne, not biblical Latin — not that you'd know that from Leonard's enunciation, which obscures the syllables. And ECM does the listener no favours by failing to provide texts or translations, as if we don't need to know what's being sung, only listen to the notes. Still, Leonard does sing beautifully, enraptured by the musical luxury which enfolds her where Gorecki suggests frozen austerity. Bryars offers pneumatic delight. Between these two works, Bowers-Broadbent plays solo organ pieces by Satie (the "Messies des Pauvres", without voice another odd ECM decision) and Milhaud. A thoughtful and stimulating programme, well executed.

That's the stargaze. Heiner Goebbels' "SHADOW" brings us

back to streetlevel, literally: the piece, commissioned for Boston public radio, finds Goebbels out on the streets, asking sundry passers-by to recite his poetry. As one of his recters says, "what the fuck is this?" The readings are then sampled, interspersed with random (?) sound-elements and a more conventionally musical setting of a text by Poe that I take to be intended as a parable about AIDS. Susan Delhim sings the text in a voice that wanders uncannily from musical idiom to musical idiom, beginning somewhere in the eastern Mediterranean and ending up on the US Pacific coast, with instrumental accompaniment to match. As a one-off radio piece, I'm sure it worked brilliantly. Heard repeatedly, it induces an urge to fast-forward through the boring, non-musical bits. Perhaps 51 minutes is 20 too many and there are many more celebrated works you can say that about.

NICK KIBBERLEY

Joe Lovano
 Universal Language
BLUE NOTE 0777 7 99830 CD/MC

It's a measure of the musicianship of tenor saxist Joe Lovano that he's able to move between settings as diverse as the former Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra (now the Vanguard Orchestra), the Paul Motton Trio, John Scofield's groups and Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra with eloquent ease. His own albums have been equally diverse with a learning curve that's close to perpendicular. From his first album as a leader in 1985, *Tone, Shapes And Colours* to his recent crop of Blue Note albums - *Landmarks* and the brilliant *From The Soul* with Michel Petrucciani (that emerged as among the very best tenor-piano-bass-drums albums of recent times) - Lovano's work, when played end-to-end, marks him as among the most significant musicians of the 1990s.

His current group with his wife, vocalist Judi Silverman, has gigged around NYC for the last three years and *Universal Language* emerges as a stunning realignment of the traditional jazz combo. By inserting Silverman's incredibly flexible voice

alongside trumpeter (Tim Hagans) and saxophones and woodwinds (courtesy Lovano) the group creates new sounds while confronting new challenges. Interestingly, even though the rhythm section for the record date (Jack DeJohnette, Charlie Haden, Steve Swallow and Kenny Werner) had not played together before the session, Lovano dispensed with rehearsals. He also insisted that the front line improvise some of the arrangements and backing figures. Consequently there's a dangerous *Kind Of Blue* sense of spontaneity that's seldom apparent in the studio, players reaching beyond the mechanical in search of the inspirational. *Universal Language* is great jazz that's played from the heart. It's an ingredient that exemplifies Lovano's playing, and it's priceless.

STUART NICKOLSON

Michael Nyman
 Time Will Pronounce
ARGO 640 282 CD

Michael Nyman
 The Piano (Original Soundtrack)
VENTURE RECORDS COVE 919 CD

Michael Nyman makes music: the way Giorgio Armani makes suits. Since *Five Orchestral Pieces* (*Opus Tree*, written just before *The Draughtsman's Contract*), he has produced richly textured, elegant and durable scores with the unmistakable signature of a "style". As Annette Moreau points out in a new brochure from Nyman's publishers Chester Music, he seems to have struck a particularly rich vein since writing the magnificently dark *Six Celan Songs* in 1990. The four works included on *Time Will Pronounce* were all completed in the spring and summer of 1992. In February, Nyman discovered the texts which led him to write the *Self-Auditory Hymn of Inanna* and *Her Omnipotence*. In August, the death of John Cage provided a focus for a set of "Canons, Chorales And Waltzes" that had been begun a year earlier and apparently inspired by the deaths of Miles Davis and Astor Piazzolla.

It was, of course, Nyman who coined the expression

"experimental music" for Cage's artistic descendants and cynics have asked persistently how it squares with Nyman's neo-classical accompaniments and retro sampling of Purcell, Mozart and Schumann. As in jazz, the musical fabric matters less than what is done to it, the angle of the cut, the stitching of separate elements, the overall fit, and it's here that Nyman demonstrates his unfailing originality and intellectual daring.

In the *Self-Auditory Hymn*, the repetitive, almost abstract line is given to a counter-tenor (James Bowman) rather than to a female voice. Inanna is the Ur-type of Ishtar and Venus, the goddess of love and war, morning and evening star. Typically, Nyman turns what might have remained an exotic conceit or found object into a highly integral piece whose use of early instruments is utterly idiomatic, more so, perhaps, than the swirling harpsichord lines of *The Convertibility Of Love Songs*, which seems almost like a chunk of cod ancestral Minimalism intended to demonstrate the increasingly universalized currency of both the term (Nyman's again) and its narrow harmonic base. (I feel much the same about his score for Jane Campion's *Patience O'Rourke* winner *The Piano*. Does he write these in his sleep, now? Does he consider them potboilers for the "serious" stuff? Is this the Emporio Armani budget range?)

Like the *Hymn*, *Time Will Pronounce* is built on a tiny harmonic footing, sermones and thirds mostly, with little of the graceful brass swooping of *For John Cage*. It's a beautiful piece, inspired by a Joseph Brodsky poem about Bosnia and has the same raw fleshiness by which Brodsky habitually avoids sentimentality.

The brasses in the Cage tribute are beautifully voiced and again a lush exterior half-hides a resilient internal structure. What it all has to do with Cage, or Miles and Piazzolla, is perhaps best taken as an act of faith, but it's clearly a piece in which Nyman puts together the types of musical thought that have influenced him, however distantly it's completely free of pastiche and thus of irony.

unknown public

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Time to stop thinking that Nyman's tongue is always in his cheek.

BRIAN MORTON

Orkater

AsVers

STARLING RECORDS SR001 CD

Loes Luca & Willem Breuker Kollektief

Deze Kant Op, Dames! (This Way, Ladies!)

BVHAAST 9301 CD

Double Dutch in more ways than one. These two musical narratives were recorded within a few weeks of each other in Amsterdam last year. The accompanying photographs make it clear that they were highly theatrical presentations, and their musical language is appropriately vivid. Their verbal language, surprisingly, is Dutch.

As a result, I haven't a clue what AsVers is about. Asked to make a guess at what the title means, I'd suggest "Bass-Adwards." But I'm not sure it really matters, and there are no clues in the CD booklet. It begins with a terrific droning, grinding dervish wail and proceeds by a sort of splatter-collage through a galimatias of musical styles. Spike Jones might be the presiding deity, as an instrumental quartet doubles on silly mouth noises and Simone de Jong battles vocally against machine guns and everything else the piece throws at her. The music is credited to Thijsen der Poll, and Albert Camus gets a namecheck in the credits for the text. If I knew what was going on, I might enjoy it less, but musical nonsense has its place, and AsVers occupies it.

The language of *Deze Kant Op, Dames!* is no less eclectic, and the language is not Dutch. Here, though, the CD booklet provides a detailed plot synopsis in English (but not Dutch: weird) so that, track by track, it's possible to have a rough idea of what's afoot. Willem Breuker's music gladly embraces cabaret, cartoons and vast swathes of jazz history, while the lengthy overture (this is a class act) sounds like a US TV cop show theme from the 1950s. The vocal weight is carried mostly by Loes Luca, a Kabarettische chanteuse of



considerable charisma. The audience obviously enjoys the show, breaking through the music with several outbursts of unscripted laughter.

Two lively shows, then, that even manage to survive the transfer to highly untheatrical CD. And if anybody can work out what AsVers is about — don't let me know.

NICK KIMBERLEY

Slint

Tweez

TOUCH AND GO TC 138 CD

Gritters

One Sock Missing

SOUTHERN 1B511 CD

Johnboy

Pistol Swing

FRANCE SYNDICATE TR16 CD

Fugazi

In On The Killtaker

DISCORD DS 70 CD

Slint, Gritters and Johnboy are part of the multitude of young experimental US bands doing a deconstruction job on rock. This shift in music-making is no more radical than much that has gone before, but it's always delicious to hear the elements of rock music — traditionally a direct form of communication — re-shaped into a language of musical non-sequiturs. With hindsight, Slint's debut *Tweez* will be seen as one of the releases that opened the door. And with their name an increasingly hip one to drop these days, it is a timely re-issue. Their music has few antecedents and listening to it is like walking in the dark into a familiar room to find that not only has the furniture been re-arranged, the lightswitch has been moved, too.

Texturally sparse and spiky (Steve Albini produced), the music follows lateral thinking shifts, constantly pushing into new areas. "Kent" contains so many cut-ups it perpetually sounds like the start of the next song. Ultimately beginnings and endings are an irrelevance and the peripheral vocal lines give few clues. *Tweez* may be sketchy but it isn't half baked. Slint play it tight and taut especially on "Pat", with jazzy

drums, delicate guitar lines and Beefheartian passages where everyone plays across each other before coming back smack in time.

Slint walk the fine line between inspiration and obscurantism with aplomb, albeit with a drunkard's swagger. Gritters try the same trick but don't pull it off so consistently. Their sound is similarly born from the indulgence of off-kilter ideas, but a more stringent quality control would have spared us some of the tired crash and bash sections especially on the shambolic "I Arise", where saxes gargle away like a bad-acid take on Syd Barrett's "Jugband Blues". A minor gripe perhaps, especially as the peaks of "One Sock Missing" are so impressive. Gritters head popwards at times, balancing dreamy choruses and teeth-gritting psychedelic structures of alien strangeness. They're instrumentally inventive too, with spectacular guitar white-outs, unexpected meshing lines and even strings on "Wonder".

Texas trio Johnboy sport geeky looks and an equally geeky name but compensate with howling-in-the-next-room vocals, agitated rhythms and skull-crunching guitar dissonance — Tony Bice's bass sound is phenomenal, grunting and gnawing into the heart of the sound. This, their debut, is a series of songs built on dense, jagged riffs. Melody and subtlety don't get a look in but with music this brutally bloodminded it isn't a problem. Neither is the fact that the album is a short one — Johnboy are best taken in small concentrated doses. Nurolen is a recommended accompaniment.

There's nothing remotely arch or obtuse about the relatively conventional Fugazi. Their third full-length album finds them firmly rooted on terra firma. Maybe it's due to their no drink, drugs or cigs lifestyle, but what you hear is exactly what you get: intelligent, politically-fired hardcore rock high on excitement. In *On The Killtaker* shows them relining their grasp of dynamics — the sweet choruses of "Sweet And Low" that always threaten to explode, and the slow feedback-laced coda of "23 Beats Off", for example. "Cassavates" is tough and funky and the punky

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ferocity of "Facet Squared" and "Great Cop" is thoroughly compulsive. Their best to date and rock as raw-boned as it comes
DAVE MORRISON

Momo "Wandel" Soumah
Mangrove
OUNGOUNGIRA RECORDS 82814 CD/HC

Nahawa Doumbia
Mangoni
STERNES TSC 1041 CD/HC

Bajourou
Big String Theory
GLOBESTYLE COORD 078 CD/HC

Momo Soumah is a phenomenon, a gifted composer, one of Africa's great saxophonists and a wonderfully Louis Armstrong-esque singer. Though well into his 60s this is his debut record as leader. It is also a landmark of West African music, as important in its way as Sali Keta's *Soro*. Soumah is amongst the first West African musicians (alongside Amadou Ba of Super Biton and Zani Diabate of Super Djaka) to realise the wealth of possibilities that jazz might have to offer West African musicians — especially in its modal forms (and especially seeing as the many jazz musicians who have come to African music have done so with such limited success).

Quite what Wandel has taken from jazz, apart from the saxophone and a certain melodic freedom, is not immediately obvious — certainly not its hoary harmonic complexity or rhetoric, for he doesn't sound like any jazzman. And maybe that is the key — what he has discovered in jazz is not foreign or exotic but something of himself, some enticing, convoluted echo of his own voice, and what he ends up producing is not therefore third rate cool-jazz, but a new kind of resolutely African music played mainly on African instruments (*kora*, *balafon*, *diembé* etc). Strange that even when Soumah plays direct tribute by covering Coltrane's "Afro-Blue", he manages to make it sound like a tune of his own.

Nahawa Doumbia is engaged in her own balancing act with the old and the new. Like Omou Sangara and Sali Sidibe she is not a

hereditary griot singer but one of a new breed heralding a new genre and social role for Malian music. Her new record is similar in intent to recent classics by Sekou Kouyate and Abdoulaya Diabate — both of whom are present here — mixing keyboards and guitars with traditional instruments in a colorful and totally convincing manner. Though less indebted to her country's Manding history, every carefully composed and beautifully played note of this music is imbued with traditional Malian proto-rhythm and blues groove. Her best so far.

Bajourou are two guitarists and a singer with some heavy credentials, put together and recorded by an English record label, who have been promoted here as the latest thing in Malian acoustic music. The music is gentle and pleasant enough, but unexceptional and never genuinely intimate, which is what I would have thought this music demanded. It's a nice idea but they're just jamming really. By comparison, listen to the interlocking strings on Baba Maal's *Tono*, or Kaly Kane Kouyate's 1997 or Kante Manfila's *Kon Kon Blues*. Rather disinterested production does not help matters
RICHARD SCOTT

Telectu
Theremin Tao
SPINEXTASIS SPINCD001 CD

1605 Munro
Lophole
DALEROJO MUSIC MU 001 CD

Telectu, the Portuguese duo of Jorge Lima Barreto and Vitor Rua, have been going since 1982, and *Theremin Tao* is a tenth anniversary compilation of unreleased work (1982-92). Minimalism is a safe description of what's happening here, though connections are made with electro-acoustic and ambient genres. My first impressions were not positive. The systematic character of these pieces became irritating: repetitive pulses overlaid with synthesizers, or natural sounds (birdsong, water) underpinned by faint drones. Several miniatures fade in fully fashioned, and fade out again. Further hearings have revealed

more detail, some interesting microtonal activity between the layers, subtle pitch variations and interlocking pulses. Well within established practices, but nicely crafted in an unobtrusive sort of way.

That last comment also applies to *Loophole* by 1605 Munro, a trio based in Germany, though that's hardly relevant. Like Telectu (but without their attention to detail) the emphasis is on electronics in conjunction with electric and acoustic guitars. The various formulaic requirements are met: rippling pulses, washes of doomy synth atmospheres, fragments of short wave radio, etc. Essentially, this is a low risk form of music-making, carefully crafted and calculated, but denying space for cultural idiosyncrasy and that crazy, unpredictable thing called passion
CHRIS BLACKFORD

Richard Thompson
Watching The Dark
NAHMBAL NWCO 5303 CD

It's almost become too easy to take Richard Thompson for granted, as he keeps on delivering the goods and reaping critical praise in utterly dependable fashion. But *Watching The Dark* reminds that he has been doing this for a full 25 years now while many of his contemporaries have been treading water (Eric Clapton) or losing their bearings altogether (John Martyn).

In comparison, Thompson's constant re-planting of his roots and experiments with French, Frith and Kaiser has yielded a rich, multifaceted body of work and this three CD set reaffirms his standing as one of Britain's foremost songwriters and guitarists. Of the 47 tracks from 23 featured years, over half are rarities, alternative takes or live versions.

A stunning version of "A Sailor's Life" (from a recently unearthed 1669 acetate), looser and more bring than its counterpart on Fairport's *Unholybitching* album, is the pick of the early material, with the youthful guitarist's lines already shaping into something special. Thompson's integration of eclectic instrumentation — krumsongs, silver band, shawm, hurdy-gurdy — into a basic guitar, bass and drums

framework started with his first solo album and reached its peak in the line-ups of the mid 80s. Live versions of "Walking Through A Wasted Land" and "Tear-stained Letter" feature accordion and saxes playing the horn-section lines, injecting staccato jg-like glitches into the folk/froll flow.

Apart from the undoubtedly influenced Tom Verlaine, no rock guitarist can touch Thompson when he hits his peak. On the live version of "Can't Win", the final yearning choruses lead straight into a jaw-dropper of a solo, droning Celtic patterns, flurries of tangled and bent notes and audacious key shifts pushing it further and further out.

His songwriting is best represented here by the aching "Waizings For Dreamers" and "I Still Dream", the previously unreleased "Galway To Graceland" and a live version — with wife Linda — of "A Heart Needs A Home". Three of the above are among Thompson's most recent songs, underlining the continuing vitality of this remarkable performer.
DAVE MORRISON

Tsunami
Deep End
SIMPLE MACHINES SMPT3 CD/UP/HC

Scrawl
Bloodsucker
SIMPLE MACHINES SMPT17 CD/UP/HC

There is a brittle quality about both these records that might mean something precious (in the positive sense) is going on, or maybe my stylus just needs renewing. If you're going to be named after a natural disaster, better a tidal wave than a drought. Tsunami hail from Arlington, Virginia ("where punk music and activism go hand in fist"), whence two guitarists singers Kristin Thompson and Jenny Toomey send out shock waves of ideological rigour, arts and crafts tips and shockingly easy to listen to music via their pioneering Simple Machines label. Given their fondness for releasing singles disguised as Neoplatonic ice creams, one could be forgiven for assuming that Tsunami's music sucked. But not a bit of it. An admirable wininess of spirit extends through the deceptively gentle bass and drum

shuffle of quiet boys Andrew Webster and John Pamer, to the more upfront menace of lyrics like "Genus Of Crack" ("I'll ever build a house, it's a good bet, I'll build it out of skin." The voices sound familiar but are hard to place until you can open your mind to embrace the concept of Tracey Thorn. Tsunami are Everything But The Girl squared then, but with a few more teeth.

Columbus Ohio trio Scraw! are trailed here as 'one of the most admired all-woman bands of the early 90s.' History seems to be speeding up lately, but if ever a band deserved only a brief wait before claiming hindsight's reward, Scraw! are they, having been horribly enmeshed in the collapse of Rough Trade US and forced to buy back their master tapes at a public auction (the identities, and bids, of nua bidders are not on record). This seven song EP first came out two years ago but disappeared quickly when the first 2000 sold out. The scary cover drawing is "an artistic rendering—any resemblance to music business executives is purely coincidental." The group, Marcy Hays, Sue Harshie and Carolyn O'Leary, are a simple but effective three-piece who will probably sound less like a depressive Bangles on their forthcoming album, which is to be produced by Steve Albini. Now where are those Ut re-issues, and what about the Salem 66 retrospective boxed set?

BEN THOMPSON

Various Artists
Instruments
RYKO HN 8302 CCMC

James Booker
Junco Partner
RYKO HN 1359 CCMC

Around the world for \$3.99: you can't argue with that. Instruments is a bargain roller-coaster ride through the highs and lows of the mighty Rykodisc roster. There is a refreshing lack of hand-wringing about "authenticity," much respect is due to whoever decided to programme the track by Outback ("two Oxford students came up with a didgeridoo guitar combination...") first. By the time this has lead into "Jerabi," the only

flamenco/kora/Danny Thompson crossover that is really going to matter this year, the attentive listener has lost all sense of direction and is feeling slightly travel sick. The law of diminishing returns definitely applies here — listen to this all at once and it becomes mood music for a wholefood restaurant in hell — but as a signpost to a series of exotic pleasures, the exhilarating Hungarian Serbo-Croat minority hitfully of Vajcsics for example, it's invaluable.

James Booker's "Black Minute Waltz" is the real stand out number though. The late and criminally unremembered Louisiana piano wizard's extravagantly funky reconstruction of Chopin's "Just A Minute" theme tune is the real introduction to his astounding solo album. Recorded in 1975, when Ryko-supremo Joe Boyd lured him into the studio by providing him a candleabra "for atmosphere", Junco Partner was Booker's first proper full length showcase, even though he'd been playing in his own and other people's (Fats Domino's, Aretha Franklin's, Wilson Pickett's) bands for 25 years. Its re-release should finally see his name elevated at least alongside Professor Longhair, Allen Toussaint et al in the New Orleans piano pantheon.

Booker called himself "the black Liberace" — the white Liberace's closing theme "I'll Be Seeing You" is the last song here — and a flamboyant and tragic life certainly helped mask his talents from the world. The heroin addiction he alludes to on "Goodnight Irene" and "Junco Partner" punctuated his career with spells in prison and mental hospital, but didn't dim his spirit if the cackling laughter and manic inventiveness heard on this record are anything to go by. A rolling thunder bottom hand and a deranged top one swagger through just about every piano style it's possible to think of. The man had a great singing voice too, like Ray Charles only sadder. It's a small consolation to know that one person at least knew how good James Booker was. "You might say Jelly Roll Morton, Mozart and WC Handy are all resurrected in the form of 'Little Chopin' in Living Color" is the sleevenotes'

perceptive assessment. The man who delivered it? James Booker
BEN THOMPSON

Various Artists
At Close Quarters
THESE 7 CD

London-based These Records has been putting on in-shop gigs for the past three years and this compilation features selections from six of them. Broadly speaking, the compilers (The Bishop and Judge Seaside) have gone for the "lamina" approach to improvisation, the sort of layered texture-making without regular pulse that was pioneered by AHM in the 60s.

The piece by Morphogenesis is a fine example of that approach, where invented instruments, found objects and electronics cohere to create a clanking, scraping, sawing, rattling polyphony. David Toop and Max Eastley work in a similar vein with amplified flutes, loops, arc and live sampling. Their piece is beautifully paced and spaced, sometimes allowing delicate tiny sounds to distort and grow up as they get louder. Charles Hayward reads his poetry and uses drone keyboards and the random intrusion of the local traffic to gripping effect. Barbed, Nicolas Collins and Peter Cusack, and Steve Beresford and John Butcher are also featured. The latter demonstrate the potency and excitement which often occurs when two quite different improvising styles meet. There are no weak links, the standard is uniformly brilliant, which, I suppose, is what one might expect from this array of experienced innovators.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Various Artists
Global Sweatbox
NATION N001 SLCD/LPNC

Remix compilations rarely include the elected versions that ordinary compilers strive to achieve. Instead, as on this Nation Records remix set, they frankly acknowledge their interim status as a report from a bunch of possible futures. Global Sweatbox insists on this by farming out five tracks to two producers and one track to

three. Uzma's "Yab Yum" as interpreted by Andy Weatherall maintains a forbidding rhythmic vortex. Occasional bursts of cowbell spin off as if flung violently from the dead centre of the centrifuge. Aki Nawaz of Fun-Da-Mental (and Nation Records' co-owner)

manifests his version of the same track as a martial beat. Overlapping loops and stats of Asian voice are conjured up as percussive invocation. On his remix of Tribal Drift's "Like This", voices set off spectral associations — Bollywood and devotional music, Impenial adventure movies and Sunday afternoon TV reruns — across the bass synth surface, sometimes collapsing into whispers, other times flaring into meteorama. The tracks on Global Sweatbox represent are the post-colonial archives as new techniques for Western disorientation. The first casualty is the rigour of the dance itself. Jah Wobble (whose track "The Unspoken Word" is given an elective status as well as a Drum Club remix) and Adrian Sherwood prefigured some of this in their 80s music by bringing nomadic lines of force to bear on Western studio bound insensibility. The presence here of such hip DJs as Fabi Paras, Weatherall and Flying Records only reveal how far Nation's own track record is from the banners of 'tribal' and 'trance' which these DJs are characterised by a spectacular innocence which maybe explains their popularity.

By contrast, Nation are characterised by their concern for the political unconscious already at work in the clubland ghetto. At its best, Global Sweatbox hears these words, tribal, trance, mantra, as the revealing simplifications they are, and rewrites and rewrites them as shadowfall, as outline.
KOOWO ESHUN

outline ECM

Rob Young gets up to date with the Norwegian label's latest releases

ECM boss Manfred Eicher's publishing company is called *Ernst* (Serious) Musik, and that's

practically the only quality his enormous roster of artists have in common. If the sound of music on this most far-sighted and innovative of labels can't help occasionally COO-ing on the Earnestly Austere, as on *Despite The Fire-Fighters' Efforts* by Aparis (the Brothers Stockhausen plus drummer Jo Thones) (ECM 1946), at least it's a necessary antidote to the self-congratulatory leap-onstage-and-women heroics of the Ultimate American Jazz Moment, as celebrated/lampooned by Bill Murray towards the end of *Groundhog Day*. The Aparis record epitomizes the huge Division Two pool of ECM recordings: an initially fascinating combination of instruments that ends up becoming too obsessed with its own textures here it's Simon Stockhausen's dominant snare- and pitch-bend keyboards that eventually jar, in a ProgRock kind of way. *The Brass Project* (ECM 147B) is a meticulously streamlined blower session led by John Warren (conductor) and John Surman, who alternates between two kinds of saxes and clarinets and dabs in a little piano. Their seven-part horn section provides an underpinning accompaniment veering from blowsy to razor-sharp, taking in the tensed Weberman hush in "Melstock Quire/Tantrum Clangley." John Marshall binds it with superbly inventive drumming, and digs out the trusty Andean waterpipe in the closing "All For A Shadow."

I confess to being agnostic when it comes to belief in Keith Jarrett's talent, and his latest trio recording does nothing to make me crave his audience. *Bye Bye Blackbird* (ECM 1467), a memorial to Miles Davis recorded shortly after the trumpeter's death in 1991, would probably have made the dark magus swallow his mute with fury. It's taped in stunning close-up, and there's no questioning the intensity of feeling running through the session, but all that doesn't disguise a pretty workaday set of standards ("Straight No Chaser," "I Thought About You" etc.), mostly ruined by Jarrett's Monica Seles singalong. No one doubts that these ex-colleagues loved him madly, but this is a backwards step unworthy

These: 387 Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2JL

Nation: through Revolver

ECM: through New Note

of its dedicatee. Any creeping dissatisfaction with this current crop of ECM's is swiftly blown away by the *Hal Russell Story* (ECM 1948). The inexplicably underrated and multi-virtuosic Russell seems to have been in on every significant movement in jazz history since Krupa, and this extended suite demands that his NRG Ensemble dash between a bewildering array of instruments, retelling yet reworking Hal's wild years with superb creative fizz. There's also a brilliant Miles memorial, "For M", which hinges on a savage invocation of Davis's crucial early 70s motonic mode, with Russell squeezing and crimping screeched notes off the top end of the trumpet's register.

In many ways the contemporary inheritor of Miles's solipsistic, searching solo tone is Jan Garbarek, who weighs in with *Twelve Moons* (ECM 1500), a more pastoral, softer-shaded set than much of his recent work. As a bandleader he seems to be refining the amount of space allowed to each player so that their contributions aren't solos in the strict sense, but overlap each other in delicately traced layers over restrained yet purposeful grooves. The inspiration for most of this music comes from Norwegian folk tunes, with Mari Boine and Agnes Buen Garnas drafted in to supply haunted vocals on two tracks. Manu Katche (drums) and Marilyn Mazur (percussion) stretch a wonderfully undulating web across the path of Rainer Brünningshaus's dampened piano, while Garbarek's gull-like soprano solos lyrically in and out of vision. In duo with the excellent bassist Miroslav Vitous on *Azmos* (ECM 1475) the saxophonist peppers Vitous's big-boned instrument from afar, the bass miked fearlessly close so that one ear's inside the body of the beast, the other spread along the neck. They don't so much duel as fuel each other's capacity for invention around a theme, while giving themselves time to explore fully the implications of every note and gesture. The only two improvisations — "Time Out Parts I and II" — feature samples from Vitous's "Symphony Orchestra Sound Library", triggered at will

from the bass

Michael Mantler's *Folly Seerig All This* (ECM 1485) is a slice from the more austere side of British composition. I find the long title track indigestible at nearly half an hour although ably backed up by the Balanescu Quartet. Together with piano and vibes they set up a rippling psyche on which the rest of Mantler's ensemble project horn and guitar solo, but it's ultimately too haughtily earnest for my liking. Hang in there for Jack Bruce reciting Beckett, though. The presence of chamber group Borealis ensures that Tenje Ryppdal's five-movement *Q.E.D.* (ECM 1474) maintains a steady sawtooth motion on your cortex. Ryppdal's trademark no-attack guitar style surfaces in some bizarre mutations including whammy-bar-heavy-muted-backwards-Hendrix in the fifth movement. Indescribably disturbed and seriously disturbing, it epitomizes the ECM creed: the best agenda is no agenda

outline tango

Ian Penman glides across the floor with recent squeezebox genius.

Like some of the great musics of our time (disco, reggae, pibroch), Tango is often dismissed in advance by the ignorant as "all sounding the same." It struggles to be released from the bonds of novelty value and clichéd apprehensions. Well, to serve up my own admixture of clichés, in Tango I hear some unearthly (i.e., heavenly) blend of Torch Song and pibroch lament. You don't need a diploma in World Music textures to hear, instantly, what Tango is 'about.' It is the sound of household gods — and gods, moreover, who dance, dress up, sneak around, fall in dangerous and rapturous love, and fall down drunk. Like some of the greatest cultural strains of our century it is a mongrel, simultaneously tied to geographical site(s) and immediately universal — a crossroads rather than a terminus. It is the sound of blissful city anomie, the steely tap of the flâneur's gambol



If Tango is a crossroads music, its waystations are singularly various: Helsinki, Buenos Aires, New York, Paris. You might risk positing Benoit's *Lost Tango in Paris* as a metaphor for Tango's divided soul: the difference between the "official" tango Brando and Schneider vs. near the end of the film — ossified, bourgeois, severely circumscribed — and the sublime and subliminal echoing expansion of the word throughout the film as a signifier for sex, death, raging against the dying of the light, amour four and urban anonymity.

In his lifetime, master accordionist (or, to be accurate, *bandoneonist*) Astor Piazzolla managed to reconcile these two polarities — of tradition and passionate departure. As the instigator of what came to be known (pejoratively, at first) as *Tango Nuevo* (New Tango), Piazzolla provoked the sort of controversy in Argentina we normally presume only football occasions. For his gift of a revitalized *Tango Nuevo* (the traditional step elongated with sculptured steps of jazz improv and classical flourish) he got death threats at home, and converts' gratitude abroad. Piazzolla's *Tango Zero Hour* (American Club) was one of the few World Music purchases I made in the 80s. I was immediately seduced, and what's more, his work hasn't been filed away in respectable dust, to be played annually, if at all. His music is constantly played, granting him his own place as a household god. But since his death last July, Piazzolla has suffered a mixed elevation. Rather like Chet Baker, he is being "honoured" by an deluge of live recordings, and the neophyte may feel justifiably wary. *Trescos De Un Doble A* (Messador 15970 CD), for example, is a live recording of Piazzolla (y su Quinteto Tango Nuevo) from 1986. The title track is a 22 minute epic, the other four tracks (including his signature piece "Tanguedia") are fiery surges to the *duende*.

The after effects of Piazzolla's experimental verve are beginning to be taken up by a new generation of performers. New York-Buenos Aires Connection are a Piazzolla-inspired NY-based quintet, whose



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MTM: Crammed, 43 Rue General
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Soul Note: through Harmonia Mundi

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The New Tango (Vai Audio VAIA 2001 CD) adds some sharp personal inflections to familiar Piazzolla-ish settings. Pianist David Pearl's jazz-strafted "Exploratoon Polar" and the opening "Tatoneando" (written by *bandoneon* player Raul Jaurena) are perhaps the stand-outs in a fifty minute set which seems to zip by. Their improvisations within set form are steely, lunging, graceful.

In England, everyday strands such as civic life, superstition, religion and sexuality often lead entirely separate lives. Tango is the product of countries where there is more pervasiveness, even permissiveness between such areas — as if the Sacred and the Profane were stained glass panes with a single light piercing through them, the shadow cast is the space, the freeze of Tango. It may be another cliché, but Tango isn't just a music but an attitude like reggae or disco it trails a whole diurnal culture in its wake. Leonard Schrader's film *Naked Tango* was much mocked, but I thought it gave a good sense of the (libertine and Ibertian) roots of Tango. As Rick Givall points out in his very useful sleeve notes to *Tango Argentina* (Music Club MCCC 098), it is the South American equivalent of New Orleans jazz — literally *bordeño* (born), an actual street music. This is an all-encompassing overview (24 tracks) of contemporary Tango, both standards and departures. It includes five excellent Piazzolla tracks, so it's a good taster for beginners. At a tangent but along the same liminal lines of longitude and latitude, *Café De Paris 1930-41* 24 *Accordions Classics From The Boulevards of Paris* (Music Club MCCC 096) includes both instrumental and vocal negotiations of the backstreet "bal musette". Jean Gabin's "Quand On Se Promise" is my personal favourite, but the standard is high. A fascinating peek into a shadowy historical corner.

This sort of stuff should be of interest not just to the usual World Music devotees, but to those with a penchant for the likes of Scott Walker, Marc Almond, Oiamanda Galas, movie soundtracks. Valeria Munarriz's helpfully titled *Tongo*

(Messador 15917-2) is a collection of ten songs, with an eight piece tango-based band shadowing her every throaty flight. These songs allow the female voice a more expressive and outwardly strident projection than many "women's" modes (C&W, Torch, etc) usually allow. And it sure doesn't all sound the same. "El Candombe" is life-affirmative, tilting towards Africa, loud and diva-like. Elsewhere, there is death and smoke and bruised lovers apertly. This is on a German label, so all the lyrics are in that language, but even the most linguophobic can figure out the mood or meaning behind thrusts like "Balada Para Mi Muerte" (co-written by that man Piazzolla) and pames like "Nostalgias".

in brief new jazz

Tony Herrington clears his desk of the recent jazz releases (well, some of them)

Affinity Affinity (CREATIVE CONTEXT CCR 101992 CD) This has some of the atmosphere of Steve Lacy's early 60s recordings (*The Straight Horn*, particularly). Two saxes, bass and drums, drawing long linear improvisations out of nine inspired-choice covers (by Braxton, Ornette, Konitz, Dolphy, etc). Tenor Rob Sudduth's solos have an richly schizophrenic quality — his tone and phrasing shift dramatically from track to track, taking on the character of the relevant fêted composer (Ornette on "Little Symphony", Dolphy on "Miss Ann", Konitz, with soprano Joe Rosenberg in the Wayne Marsh counterpoint role, on "Subconscious"). A rather dry, internalized art of concentration informs on all the music, which will probably further hamper its already limited outreach. A shame. Its rewards are considerable.

Borah Bergman with Andrew Cyrille *The Human Factor* (SOUL NOTE 121212 CD) Monomaniacal depthright keyboard improv. The usual constituents for this Taylor, Crispell, Pullen, Bergman pictured as a lined face indub above flailing keys — right arm flashing into spasm, left hand bunched in ballet.

list clusters. His playing is characterised by a relentless pile up and compression of notes, leavened by the use of scattered intervals, oblique sensibilities. Echoes of Paul Bley in the ballads — shards of melody, half-in, shrugged off into great chasms of silence. Cyrille's role is that of nebulous commentator, quietly, constantly spiralling in and out of the piano's crystalline structures.

Anthony Braxton Quartet
Victoriaville 1992 (VICTO CD 021) | seemed to lose track of AB's quartet releases sometime around the turn of the decade. Did we cover this one already? Whatever, this, a live set recorded at the 1992 Victoriaville fest and atypically dominated by four quickly sketched comps, isn't one of his essential documents. Sound is very muddy — which only serves the closing version of "Impressions", where the group becomes a breaking wave of sound. Maybe worth it for the dialogue on the sleeve note (by turns bewildering, funny, touching, nutty) between AB and our own John Corbett (who remains unfazed through Braxton's looping roams through concepts of metaphysics, "blackness", etc.)

The Cocksals Long Sound (CARROT TOP SAKI 002) | Notable for containing Hal Russell's last recordings, footnotes to his own too-small repertoire made one month before he died. "Clown's Coffee" rehearses an old joke (self-deprecating energy music), but "Tenement" is a minor gem, the soprano fluttering like a trapped bird over funereal brass figures. Much of the rest of this release from self-proclaimed "musically inept" Chicago quartet sadly misses their own "defining aesthetic" of The Shaggs meet Albert Ayler. Instead, the music assembles itself from random bits of The Lounge Lizards, Talking Heads, REM, Zappa, Tom Waits and other avoid-at-all-cost names.

D'semble D'semble (BLUE BLACK BB CD 44001) | Out of Manchester into the hot. Opening track a long legato curl in and out of freedom's inner limits. Elsewhere, old/new dreams of Ornette on Atlantic, late

AACM, McGregor's Blue Notes Trumpet out of Dons Ayler and Cherry — a lightly grating buzz. Also sub-Blurt sax, rhythms in a rolling or crippled gait — depends on how you hear them. Protean and/or suffering from a crisis of choice (the contemporary condition). Originally released last year when it was impossible to get hold of. Now available — somewhere.

Johnny Griffin Quartet Plus
Three Dances Of Passion (ANTILLES 512 604 CD) | About as far as you can get from the headlong adrenalin rush of Griffin's 50s albums (*Chicago Calling*, *The Congregation*, etc.) The use of a trombone-tuba-french horn front line as foil to Griffin's increasingly Hawkins-like tenor draws parallels with the swing era aesthetic of the white West Coast, circa mid-50s. Tempos, solos and ensemble voicings similarly exert a balm sense of weightlessness, warm currents blowing in across Pacific seas. Don't worry about the less than dramatic plumbing of emotional depths (the title's a bit of a misnomer), this is an ambitious and intriguing record for Griffin to make at this late stage, and at least shows he's still interested, unlike

John Lurie National Orchestra
Men With Sticks (MADE TO MEASURE WITH 34 CD) | Musically (we'll pass on the less-than-pressing question of his acting ability), John Lurie sounds as if he has decided to toast for the rest of eternity. The Lounge Lizard's anti-jazz sounded good for about two weeks somewhere back on the cusp of the 80s, but nothing he's done since has been of the slightest consequence. This features a series of forlorn alto solos over vaguely Afro-Brazilian percussion tracks. It seems to gain inspiration (if that's the word) from the Wayne Shorter/Oludum passages on Bill Laswell's *Bahia Black* project, but sounds pathetic in comparison.

Wolfgang Muthspiel Sextet
Black & Blue (MADEO 517 653 CD)
Bostonian Friends | Peace For Africa (JPM 151472 CD) | German guitarist Muthspiel enters the world through the same door as Michael Brecker, Bob Berg, Mike Stern,

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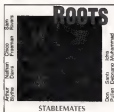
the essential
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Music from the
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John Scofield and the rest. That's to say he applies some ProgRock attitude (ie, an emphasis on technical virtuosity, the grand statement, aesthetic complacency) to a squeaky clean, four-square conception of modern jazz. In such a context a solo guitar hoedown out of Jerry Garcia seems strangely appropriate. BF features jazz bore faves like Jerry Gonzalez and Adam Nussbaum in various combinations with old-timer Herb Pomeroy and lots of people I haven't heard of. What I want to know is, how come white jazz like this never gets pejoratively labelled neo-classical, retro-nostalgic, etc. even when it makes Freddie Keppard (never mind Roy Hargrove, Marcus Roberts, etc.) sound revolutionary?

New York Unit Now's The Time (PADDLE WHEEL KICJ 108) Over The Rainbow (PADDLE WHEEL KICJ 136) **Good Fellas** Good Fellas 2 (PADDLE WHEEL KICJ 115) Three Far East initiatives, formed for/out of Japanese obsession with abiding myths of Black Americana (jazz, that is). NY teams drummer Tatsuya Nakamura with a dream ticket of John Hicks and Richard Davis. On Now's The Time Hannibal Peterson launches stratospheric phrases across an unusual programme of standards. On Over The Rainbow Pharoah Sanders unloads the usual armoury of spit tones, multiphonics, lyric imagination and hymnic simplicity into versions of "Naima", "Greensleeves" and the title track. **Good Fellas 2** (drummer Yoichi Kobayashi as driving force) tyfies both strengths and weaknesses of (so-called) neo-classical outcroppings of current black US jazz. On the one hand, great soloists like Vincent Herring and Philip Harper, seamless ensembles, a depth of collective concentration and commitment that draws you right into the heart of the music. On the other, a sense of longueurs, déjà vu, familiarity with the music's adherence to limits and impulses long distant, long superceded.

Paul Pimley & Lisle Ellis Kaleidoscopes (HAT ART CD 6117) 11 Onnette comps reorganized as brilliant, free-moving piano/bass duets. Pimley and Ellis are long-

Paul Pimley & Lisle Ellis, Kaleidoscopes.



Unit: Rec Rec Genossenschaft, PO Box 717, CH-8026, Zurich, Switzerland

Paddle Wheel: through Pinnacle

Hat Art: through Harmonia Mundi

term partners and their ideas seem to dovetail even as they scatter into each man's perceptions of the music's outer limits. Pimley finds his own resolutions in the maze of possibilities which Cecil Taylor bequeathed to modern pianists, while Ellis's bass playing extends the melodic and harmonic complexities and bottom-heavy rhythmic matrices of the original pieces to fascinating ends. The spectral, organic qualities of fast tracks like "Folk Tales" and "Dancing in Your Head" are dusted off to reveal cores of pastoral abstraction. The ballads are even better — the rising blue arcs and listing structures of the revolutionary "Beauty & A Rare Thing" are here made over into something altogether more unforthcoming. A great record

Roots Stablemates (H 6 OUT 87 7021 CD) This is personal, but on *Stablemates*, the music recedes behind the damning fact that once radical players like Nathan Davis, Sam Rivers, Arthur Blythe are reduced to European-instigated fête-the-tradition heritage industry exercises like this to get any decent work. You can admire the high purpose with which they approach tributes to Oliver Nelson, George Adams and Eric Dolphy, but when the great promise of their own early music (*Rules Of Freedom*, *Fusio Swing Song*, *Lennox Avenue Breakdown*) has been allowed to wither and fade on the vine of indifference and contempt, you've got to ask, what's the fucking point?

Paul Smoker Trio Genuine Fables (HAT ART CD 6126) Long standing Yank trio of high either improvisors. What grabs here is the music's lack of centre (which might be a consequence of the mix). Everything seems to be ording some tact ghost axis — drums occupy the middle distance, foreground bracketed by bass and trumpet. A version of "St Louis Blues" (with Smoker sounding like a lab technician's take on L. Bowie) imposes a trad hierarchical structure on the group, but elsewhere the music exists in a rare egalitarian state (particularly the 'electro-acoustic' pure sound

episodes on "Tetra").

Tobende Ordnung Tobende Ordnung (UNIT UTR 4055 CD) Trumpeter Peter Schärli (present here) released an overlooked album on hat ART years ago called *Schnep Schnep* — this sounds much like that, only better. Ex-VAO saxophonist Co Streiff is in the driving seat — his apocalyptic compositions dominate the record. Lots happening. Heraldic brass fanfares over Low End slug crawl beats, or stop time passages plect with nervous. Most tracks start out as very dark, elliptical jazz with prog rock incisions and fragment into alien portallist soundworlds. "Mond Ballade" makes the link between German free jazz/improv and twilight zones of European industrial culture.

in brief clubtrax

Kodwo Eshun ram-raids the new dance releases

Various Artists CB4: Original Soundtrack (MCA 10758 CDLP) As the soundtrack to a film devoted to a masquerade of gangster identity, CB4 has a problem: NWA's music was already cinematic, came at you with location, characters and narrative all sketched from the outside. It also had the benefit of high definition aural invisibility, its twists, full stops, pauses and breaks in the flow made listening into something like driving a car rather than must watching. Considering the NWA were both in and out of the frame of their music, were both object, representation of object (as reporters) and parodists of that action, the record, let alone the film, was always going to be lagging behind. Side one features a new and lazy PE cut as well as a harsh KRS1 track, while side two has a trio of covers by the fictional group CB4. Their pastiche cut "Straight Out of Locast" catches the sneer but not the woman hating tautology which drove NWA's games of simulation ghetto life and which their boy fans enjoyed so much. Without the nihilism of that moment, the record falls in its face

Debravation The Murk Moves (**120600J112**) Whatever the initial versions of Debbie Harry's new 12" sound like, they matter little in comparison to these mixes. A two-man production/label set up out of Florida, Murk are the low end theoreticians of Garage, the guys who have single-handedly brought the chikka-chikka scratch guitar as scat, the Murk boys steer their cut up scat towards a smart ass sassiness. If Terry is a heavy, then Murk are just wise guys — hustlers who assassinate the song and toss the pieces as assuredly as Dodge the vixenist — but do it with a whistle as they work. The "Deep South Mix" plays as if it's the unconscious of LL Cool J's "Going Back to Cali" — the loose booty to that great track's high assed tuba Or is it trombone?

Funkdoobiest Wow Wow Wow (**IMPRIAL PROMO 12**) While KMFDD, Pharcyde, Madcap and now The Khomeinists and Souls Of Mischief continue to disassemble the intensity of HipHop, the Soul Assassins axis of Cypress Hill, House of Pain and latest member Funkdoobiest, are drawing up the bridge and battering down the hatches. In these groups, the lines are kept short and staccato. The rhythms, monosyllabic, keep running up short against their limits, the blunt gruff vocals ending in a series of multiple punch lines. Very nasal, very staccato fresh in a "I'm a cartoon and I like it" kind of way.

Gumbo Basement Music (**CHRYSLAS 4-24635 12**) If "Tennessee" was Arrested Development's stab at "Strange Fruit" for the HipHop nation, it wasn't perceived as such in the UK. Instead it was heard as a long delayed follow-up to De La Soul No. 1, themselves severely misread as bourgeois B boys from Sector 6 AD. Leader Stewart's production of this debut single from his new protégés finds him turning his back on his admiring misinterpreters and heading underground in order to meditate, away from music, on new forms which can reconfigure nightmares as platinum selling indirection. It starts with the tape winding down, running backwards in an orchestral rewind which takes

up the end of "Tennessee". The rest — smart, impassioned, word choked — is about every day apocalypse. Too clever, too moving to be a hit even with stupid UK mixes which I'm sure will follow soon enough.

Sine Round And Round (WHITE LABEL 12) Highly spring track from Sine who come from the well regarded Time Recording stable from Nottingham. This is reminiscent of the Strictly Rhythm label's output at its peak, which if you know that stuff, is high praise. It's going to be called UK Garage but since Garage is a post-national sound, it's difficult to understand what the UK is referring to other than the mere fact of having been recorded in England. The gated piano sends a series of minor key shifts and tremors through then unstable quivering vulnerability of all the mixes.

Speedy J Ginger (**WARP 14 COLP**) At times building on Mantronix's abandoned experiments in cyborg soul, Speedy J, young Dutch producer, builds a patient, clean, completely frictionless sound on his debut LP. This comes as a relief in that Techno is obsessed with the archaic (I expect a drudgery British/ambient track any moment). It's old fashionedly futuristic, a sharp slice of a record. The synth on his highly rated track "De-Orbit" is the sound of liquid passing at speed through mile long transparent tubes while "Pepper" is the whoosh of air your jet propelled boots make when you've worn them a lot recently.

Various Artists Swingbeat (**ICA REC30674 COLP/PG 93**) is the year of the New Jack Takeover. I see Mary J Blige, Jade, Silk, Porinrat, Intro, etc, as debutantes, super groomed, hyperslick heirs to The Supremes, a teeny bit vacant and vocally, socially rehearsed to perfection. If you haven't heard Mary J Blige with her meditation on teen death "Reminiscence", or Jade's self division between the street and the church on "Cherish", or Teddy Riley's swingbeat-goes-to-the-ghetto special effects fanfare on "Rumpshaker", then get this LP.

(continued from page 47) developing track orchestras, getting some things together — you know what I'm saying. But because he could do that, because he can play the concerto, it doesn't make him the king of jazz. The thing about jazz is that it reveals who you really are. Wynton is not a jazz innovator — he's just not that kind of a person. But he's an excellent trumpet player and he has a knowledge of music that none of these classical guys can even touch. They couldn't even get close — Wynton would kick their arse. Yeah, he's a brilliant trumpet player, he's just not a brilliant person.

ICE-T "Warning" from Home Invasion (Rhyme Syndicate)

[The track is a warning that if you are offended by such words as "slut", "tramp", "bitch", "shit", "nigger" and "you motherfucker", you shouldn't continue listening.] [Laughs] Well, music can be used a lot of ways, and a lot of ways can be detrimental. A lot of people just use things to get attention or cause controversy or just sell albums. None of these words were words that my five-year-old grand daughter hasn't heard. So it's not as if these things are out of the ordinary. But I don't think the emphasis should be put on them as much. I think a lot of it can teach a lack of respect for women, for gays. Some of the things in this music are very negative and I'm against negative images in music. So where do you stand on "Cop Killer"?

[Laughs] I think that everything should be available, I think people should know about these things. But I don't want to say what I really think. I'm not going to say. I know how to deal with Wynton, but the police I've got to deal with every day. In some ways, his attitude towards the police was realistic because the police kill so many people, needlessly. If I was in that bag, if I were a guerrilla warrior, yeah I would do a whole lot of cop killing. I would be a really good terrorist you know.

But we're trying to promote a positive image — as long as we keep promoting these negative attitudes

we are just perpetuating the same racism, the same homophobia, the same bullshit that's already going on. So my objective, what I'm trying to do with the music, is to try to get out of this kind of situation, to try to make things a little bit better. We've run out of time. There's no time to play you the Kenny Dorham track I'd dug out. Oh, that would have been nice. I'm crazy about Kenny Dorham. Kenny Dorham's the reason I'm playing trumpet now. He was just so hip, and I just wanted to be like that. I just wanted to be a cat like Kenny Dorham — he was a musicians' musician. But, you know, there is something I'd like to hear. Do you just happen to have any Rex Stewart.

Yeah, but only some of his later stuff from the 50s, I think. Well, play me some of that — people tell me I sound just so much like Rex Stewart.

REX STEWART "Tillie's Twist" from Rendezvous With Rex (Limelight)

Yeah, I sure do sound like Rex Stewart. Rex has this more vocal approach. I think what I've done is taken up where he left off. Where some guys use his tricks or his comments, I've taken them as a basis for a whole other conversation. Like I say, the music was so wide open years ago. Now it's getting that it's so closed. When I first went to New York there were so many different trumpet sounds — Kenny Dorham, Blue Mitchell, Johnny Cokes — I mean, they could play the same song and you'd hear five totally different solos. Now you get these guys copying Wynton — copying a copy — and they sound like fucking clones. That's why I call these guys fucking androids. They're clones man. □

Lester Bowie appears with the Art Ensemble of Chicago at London's Union Chapel on 8 July, and at the Glasgow Jazz Festival (1-11 July).



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Letters

Fire Place

Ben Watson's 'The Fire Last Time' (*The Wire* 111) suggests a 'universalism' about Free Jazz that I find misleading. His writing is refreshingly unmanipulated but hides a number of truths about that era's music.

For starters: the 1964 October Revolution in Jazz was deliberately given that title by its organiser, Bill Dixon, Archie Shepp and Charlie Haden were not the only American musicians with a sense of political history. And while the revolution that occurred in other spheres of existence in 1968 gave black musicians a new audience, the impetus for their revolution was rooted in what was taking place both in the United States and in Third World liberation movements. While these movements paralleled and, as he acknowledges, inspired other events — the modern women's movement, it should be said, was begun by women who had worked with SNCC in the Deep South — it was a black aesthetic that nourished Peter Brötzmann et al, just as it was the radicalism of Armstrong and Parker that had given previous generations of outsiders a music to play. Given the devoutly apolitical tenor of present times, I don't think this can be stated too often.

Two corrections: Norman Howard is the name of the trumpeter who recorded with Albert Ayler, Noah Howard is a saxophonist and one of the Americans who settled in Paris. And the 1969 Pan-African Festival in which Americans Orford Thornton, Archie Shepp, Grachan Moncur III, Dave Burrell, Alan Silva and Sunny Murray participated was held in Algiers, not Tanger. There they joined forces with poets Ted Joans and Don L Lee, and the exiled Minister of Information of the Black Panther Party, Eldridge

Cleaver. On a journey further south into the desert, they gathered material and inspiration for works that went beyond the BYG recordings, some of which were made during the Festival, others soon after in Paris where they hooked up with the Art Ensemble of Chicago and other musicians.

But we all make mistakes. In *As Serious As Your Life*, I claimed Sunny Murray recorded for BYG before going to Algiers. And in my photo-spread (same issue), I failed to point out that the first image shows black radicals, including members of the British Black Panthers, attempting to take over the head of the 'Walk for Freedom'. A severe omission for which my wrist should be slapped.

Val Wilmer, London

Can't Bear It

On viewing Huggy Bear at Newport's TJ's in March, I, like Ian Penman (*The Wire* 112) was reminded of the works of Greil Marcus, but for a precisely converse reason. As I recall, there is a section in *Lipstick Traces* wherein Marcus posits that the only way the confrontational performances of the Sex Pistols could be topped would be if the audience themselves arose as a body and declared, "We are now the performers."

That night we were treated to a scenario wherein the Huggies stroppily tried to order the audience about (a definite punk rock no-no) to interesting effect. Men commanded to the back of the room responded by standing on stage, and cries of "the stage is a barrier invented by girls" in ridiculous cod-Welsh accents 'Girls' ordered to the front yelled "fuck off" and "get your tits out" (!). The Huggies, bemused by this behaviour, eventually fled. The

audience this night, incidentally, featured at least two people who have appeared in the works of Greil Marcus, some members of the Pooh Sticks and Andrea from *The Darling Buds Of May* (greatly amused at being approached and encouraged to "form a band").

In the ensuing month or so, the gg was written up from a hysterically racist/pro-Huggy point of view in *Melody Maker* the playfulness of the audience became "the Welsh causing trouble". Miranda Sawyer, in *Select*, to her credit, actually bothered to find out what was being heckled (top headline: "less structuring") Local fanzine *Frug* began printing vicious anti-Huggy cartoons. A tape was circulated, causing great desire to attend a Huggy gig from persons absent that night who wanted a go at heckling (hurry back to Gwent Huggies your public awaits!). In short, a spirit of enterprise and playfulness, such as Greil wistfully described in *Dead Elvis*, came to pass. Is this what the Bear want? One would like to think so, but then, who gives a

Andrew Rimmel, Gwent

Tourist Trap

Richard Scott's 'Letter From Gambia' (*The Wire* 112) should really have been titled 'Letter From The Gambia'. But that is not what stirred me to write. My own particular interest is European reaction to Africa and African music. I was specially struck by his phrase, "taking it for the tourists".

Tourists, en masse, are a pretty easy target, especially when one feels protective about something close to one's heart (eg. the music scene in The Gambia). Tourists are individual persons who have paid money to visit a particular country (*you don't say* — Ed). Clearly they go there for a wide variety of reasons, but, having gone there, why should they be deprived of real African music? After all, they are providing paid work for local musicians. Playing to tourists in hotels and bars is not a reason to dilute the music or produce a degenerate version of it (it is a time-honoured way for musicians to keep body and soul together). It is up to the musicians themselves to produce quality goods. Gambian musicians, by playing the best music they have, are contributing to a quality control of their own tourist industry and ensuring future work for themselves.

And what if Gambian musicians achieve the "dream of a Western tour"? Are they then "taking it"? What if Richard were to play at a music festival somewhere? Would he be taking it? Concert goers are, after all, a variety of tourist.

Richard's letter suggests that he knows and loves African music. Even he, however, seems subject to the African myth: African music is still inseparable from everyday life (culture) there, and he implies that its separation is a degeneration. If he holds this view, he must be prepared to justify his own role in Africa. Is playing for tourists a separation from the culture, or a useful, paying extension of it?

In a moment of weakness, in an otherwise pleasant article, Richard is saying, "Look at me. I'm not a tourist. I can look down on them." **David Barnaby, Kantamanto drummer, Manchester**

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